

CONDENSATION OF KABBALAH

by William G. Gray

(A Hebrew/English Glossary can be found at the end of this document)

PART 1: GOD TO MAN

It would be wrong to ask “what is *the* Kabbalah?” yet correct to inquire “what is Kabbalah?” Kabbalah derives from a Hebrew word *KBL* meaning literally “to receive instruction.” It has implications covering an immense area of inquiry. It implies a field embracing the whole of human investigations into our relationships with the spiritual side of our natures ever since we started thinking about them from every angle of approach. By itself the word is a “blanket-term” covering the complete study of Cosmos from a purely spiritual standpoint.

All human races concern themselves with cosmic calculations and spiritual speculations but in the case of the Semitic race in particular, some of them thought it best to begin by setting out a definite system for tackling the problem. A sort of: “Before you start thinking, find out why, what, and how to think” idea. In the end, they decided the simplest way of all was the “One, two, three, four” method. Start with a single idea and work on it until another one came out of it. Then take those two ideas and combine them so that a third appeared. Push the three around until a fourth came out, and so on. Since humans calculated in tens because of having ten digits on both hands which have been used in primitive sign-language for countless centuries, they decided to adopt a decimal system for dealing with their ideas about Divinity and all related spiritual subjects.

The question was where to start. Since the teaching was that God began with Nothing why not start from there? The common Hebrew word for nothing (*Ayn*) was in fact a question in itself, deriving from two little words: “Eh na” meaning: “What now?” or “Where from here?” It really meant that nothing was known beyond that point. That produced another notion of formlessness, and so the word *Sof* - limits - got added. *Ayn Sof*. Since God’s creation was first supposed to be Light which was yet unmanifested as anything, the Negative state of *Ayn Sof Aur*, or Unknown and Limitless Light (*Aur* means Light in Hebrew) was conceived as a Zero or cypher = 0, out of which God was said to create everything in existence.

This Limitless Light focussed into active energy at the first state or “Sphere” in the sense of what a modern scientist would call a “field.” Kabbalists called this primal condition of pure power *Keter*, a crown or summit for two reasons. First they considered God to be King of the entire Universe, and secondly it signified the top or summit of anything. Here was the Supreme Summit of Creation.

From the combination of 0 + 1, came the idea of pure consciousness pouring out in a consequent creative stream. This was considered as a competence to construct anything and everything needed for Life. This called for supreme Wisdom, so this second Field or Sphere, was named *Chochmah* which means Wisdom in Hebrew.

Putting 0 + 1 + 2 Concepts together, it seemed obvious that something would be needed to react with if definite results were to appear anywhere, so out of them a third concept of a

Sphere arose which they named *Binah* - Understanding. A reflective, instinctive sort of awareness. Now they had three types of consciousness to consider. These were: 1. Consciousness itself, 2. A masculine outgoing consciousness, 3. A receptive feminine consciousness. This seemed to be the process-principles of creation. The right-left-centre, Yes-No and Maybe, positive-negative and neutral combination that everything appears to consist of.

Combining the lot, the Kabbalists pushed them a stage further and saw another positive state of generous outpouring they called *Chesed*, or mercy-Benevolence. Realising that a counter-curb had to be applied as a control to make any energy effective, they again combined all the previous Spheres, and conceived a fifth state or Sphere called *Gevurah*, or Severity, the economy of existence which applies a brake to the acceleration of initial energy. Having thus got things under control, a central resultant came into being as the Sphere of *Tiferet*, or beauty and Harmony. A condition of balance, stability and order to act as a nucleus for the now controllable Pattern being produced.

So now the triplicity-scheme could be repeated on lower levels and the next issue of energy in a "masculinized" direction was termed *Netzach*, Victory or Achievement. Something done successfully. Accomplishment. A natural outcome of what has been done so far, but in order for this to be fulfilled, something will be needed to appreciate and realize it. So an eighth Sphere or field was thought to be *Hod*, or Glory, otherwise Honour. An appreciation of everything achieved and a sense of how it should be treated and held together or developed in order to make it worthwhile for projection further toward materialisation. Since another Sphere-concept had to complete the triad as a resultant of the last two, this was forthwith produced as *Yesod*. Literally this meant a Foundation or basis on which to build. The final poising point from which consciousness might be pushed into concrete forms of existence. It also means the foundation of a family, and here it meant the Family of Man. Note that hitherto, the Spheres have consisted of consciousness alone without matter. By combining these as $0 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8$, we get 36, and $3 + 6 = 9$. So here we have the Ninth Sphere or point of triple triplicity. We should also remember that families begin by blood, and this is the point where our worldly relationship by blood begins with its spiritual equivalent which is the *Sangreal*. Again we add the Concepts and get $0 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 = 45$, and $4 + 5 = 9$ again.

To complete the decade we project it into a tenth Sphere of *Malchut*, or a Kingdom. This is the result of all previous Spheres being concentrated and pushed through into what was termed the "Kingdom of God" or the normal state of ourselves and Nature in this world. So here we come to ourselves in this world wondering how we got here and asking the eternal question of "Eh na?" again, which brings us back to the *Ayn* once more. So the Cycle of Cosmos seems complete after ten distinct stages. That is the way early Kabbalists conceived creation. Three "pushes" of three concepts symbolised as spheres, followed by a final heave which produced material existence. Much like the birth-process where after nine months of gestation, one last effort expels the entire result from a mother's body, and a separate yet blood-related soul becomes born. A case of "God creating Man after His own image and likeness."

This four-fold process suited the creative name of God perfectly. *YHVH* (I was, I am, I will be). Three letters with the second re-used as a final. The Kabbalists thought in terms for this by postulating a "Four World" theory, or four distinct advances of consciousness by which god arrived at the state of creation we live in. They classified these as:

1. *Atzilut* or a condition of **Origination** in which God did no more than conceive the bare idea of anything, such as "Wet-Dry," "Light-Dark," and "Hard-Soft," and so forth. Because Kabbalists saw this as a direct act of God they classified it by a

different God-aspect for each Sphere, and saw it as a continuous process through all the spheres.

2. *Briah* or **Creation** wherein Originated Consciousness became somewhat more defined by individual Archetypes known as Archangels, one per Sphere into clearer categories like - a light **sky**, a hard **metal**, a wet **ocean**. Then Originated and Created consciousness was handed over to whole specialist orders of Intelligences called Angels, one type per Sphere into the next condition of:
3. *Yetzirah* or **Formation**. Here everything gets shaped and formed into the likeness of what it was supposed to become such as light sky **over** the **Earth**, hard metal of iron **under** the **Earth**, wet ocean of **salt sea** in the **Earth**. Lastly the processed consciousness was produced as some Time-Space-Event in physical terms at the “world” of
4. *Assiah* or **Expression**. Here things become located with very definite placement, such as “light sky at noon over this place on Earth, wet ocean of salt sea in such a size, depth and locality, hard metal of iron at that particular place in this era

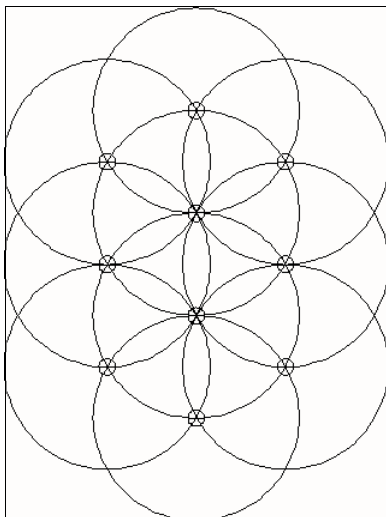


Figure 1 Development of Spheres

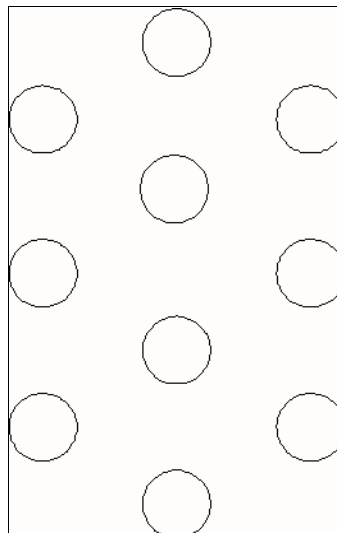


Figure 2 Original position of Spheres

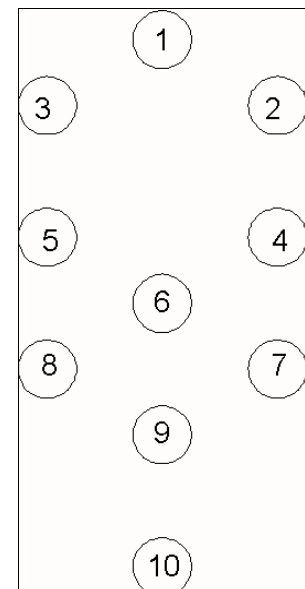


Figure 3 Spheres after the “Fall”

and quantity. All this process was said to be governed by planetary or some other celestial phenomena, one per Sphere as usual.

This entire productive process is one of commencing vaguely with a single idea, then focussing it into clearer and finer detail with each step until it becomes a definite finalised factor of our existence in this world. We ourselves are part of this creation, and we should see each other in that Light. It is the *YHVH* process in us. When Kabbalists had assembled this theoretical structure as a scheme whereby God manifested Himself out of Himself until Man and the rest of evident existence appeared out of Nothing, they tried to visualise all this as a regular plan they could look at, calculate with, and study in greater detail. They wanted not only a written, but a designed formula for the complete concept of conceptions.

Mathematicians considered the best symbol for God in the act of creation would be a simple circle around a central point, since the Deity was likened to a circle with a centre everywhere

and a circumference nowhere. Besides, the circled point had been and still is a symbol for the Sun or Cosmic Light-Life. So they set the point of the instrument which had been in the centre at the perimeter of the circle and traced another which intersected the centre of the first. They

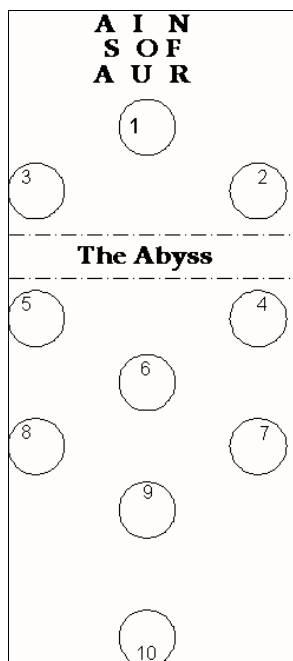


Figure 4 The Abyss on the Tree

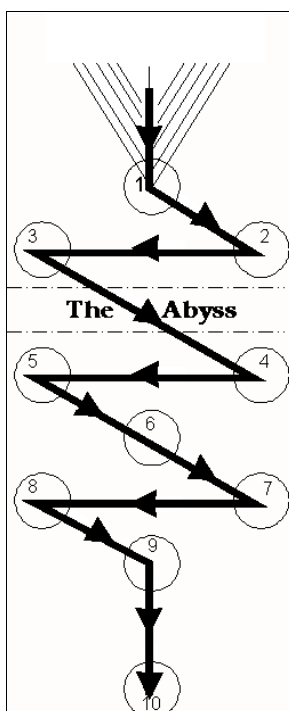


Figure 5 The Sword or Lightning Flash on the Tree

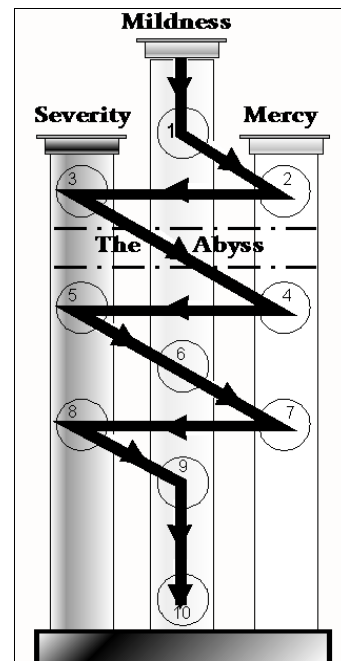


Figure 6 The Pillars on the Tree

repeated this process until it became an ever-recurring pattern as at Figure 1. When they had done this, they took the centres of the circles where they intersected, and got the ten-point design shown at Figure 2. At first this seemed to fit their concepts nicely until they realised that if God were placed at the top, and Man at the bottom which seemed natural, the polarity of the fourth Sphere down would be wrong, because it should have been on the masculine right instead of the neutral centre. They solved this problem by considering that if the final creative act were equivalent to the expulsion of an individual from a womb, then the final Tenth Sphere of the "Human World," should be another stage lower and the two above it should follow suit to balance the design. This gave Figure 3, which left a space below the top three concepts which provided a useful symbology of its own. A gap, or Abyss just below this top level of consciousness which clearly indicated the difference between Divine and human thinking. It also symbolised our legendary "Fall" by which we were supposed to reach the level of this material world. This Abyss was then marked as per Figure 4.

The next logical step was to show the descent of God to the state of man by connecting the Spheres up by lines as shown in Figure 5. Since this was reminiscent of a lightning-flash, and God was said to have created by means of light, that was what this part of the design got called. It then remained to show the transverse triplicity of masculine-feminine-neutral, by placing Pillars behind the right-left-centre spheres, and in the eyes of very early Kabbalists, that completed the Great Plan. They called the lines of descent Paths of Power, because that was what they were, and they were ten. As the original script said: "Ten and not nine, ten and not eleven. Count carefully and calculate with caution."

For those that have seen the full design of the Tree of Life elsewhere, and wonder why it is not shown here, that is because other items were considered as part of the program whereby Man

got back to God, and here we are only concerned with the descent of Divinity. Sometimes the "lightening-flash was termed a "sword," because of the "Fiery Sword" which God was supposed to have placed before the Garden of Eden to prevent humans going back there before they had solved all the problems they would have to face in the outside world. That was also why this design became known as the "Tree of life," because having fallen by the Tree of Knowledge, man would have to rise (or evolve) by the Family Tree of life connecting us with God by a series of step-by-step efforts until we had enough Knowledge to bridge the Abyss between us and that God (which represented ignorance) and so become in the words of the Bible: "Like unto the Gods, immortal."

The Tree of course is just the bare bones or ABC of the Kabbalistic System. The separate blocks as it were, by combinations of which all the rest of an enormous edifice can be built up out of consciousness alone. That is how Cosmos was constructed "by the thoughts of God." Divinity combined one piece of consciousness with another in mathematical order and precision. In fact the whole Tree is a mathematical calculation in itself concerning God-Man relationships. Being forbidden to worship any solid kind of shaped idol, the Hebrew produced an energy-concept which was purely a mental arrangement of numerical values based on the decimal system. Not that Kabbalah is an Orthodox Hebrew practice at all. In fact it is regarded as heretical by most pious Jews, because it implies a distinctly feminine side to Divinity which would not suit their paternalistic attitude.

However, it should not be assumed that Kabbalah is entirely Hebrew by any means. Relating Man with God by mathematics is a very ancient idea, and Semitic scholars only developed their version of it, which proved very practical and based on the soundest principles. Once the decimal scheme became clear to non-Semites interested in occult philosophy, the Tree-idea grew very greatly. It was used chiefly for classifying and coding specific spiritual themes under group-headings, so that each Sphere, and later the Paths between them, became one of such headings under which vast amounts of material could be stored rather like a filing cabinet or a computer. Thus in theory one only had to think hard enough at any heading or "key" and access could be gained to all that followed in that category of consciousness. Of course this meant an enormous amount of work while "programming" the scheme, but Kabbalists thought this well worth the effort for the sake of what they gained from it.

If mankind as a whole, or sufficient individual members of it should ever attain a spiritual state of what might be regarded as "Perfection," this world as we know it would become extinct for us, and the pattern of the Tree would revert back to its "pre-Fall" state as shown by Figures 1 and 2. The tenth Sphere would become the ninth, and the ninth and the sixth move up to the present sixth and fourth positions respectively. Thus what was the sixth Sphere will then become the fourth, or "Bridging Sphere" or *Da'at* across the deep Abyss of darkness and ignorance, illuminating everything by its clear light directly reflecting Understanding and Wisdom throughout the inner universe. The other Spheres will change numbers but not natures, and the whole of Creation will become a model of perpetual motion or 100% efficient energy. Everlasting existence.

Our ideal immortality may be a very long way from us yet, but if individuals are to begin the process, then the sooner we start climbing the Tree of Life the better. It all begins by learning the primer of spiritual awareness consisting of the ten fundamental ideas behind Life Itself, the four ways of bringing them into concrete and objective consciousness, and the triplicity of their combinations. Just as the three primary colours of red, yellow and blue with white for light and black for dark can paint any picture you can conceive, or the letters of the alphabet tell any story you can imagine, so will the fundamentals of the Kabbalistic Tree of life explain everything about human-Divine relationships you want or need to know. Yet yours is the responsibility for learning how to relate these with each other in the right ways. So start by

getting them firmly and deeply enough in your mind and soul before you begin wondering what to do with them later. Even Einstein had to begin by counting 1, 2, 3, 4, and Shakespeare by learning how to write A, B, C, D. Methodology is all very well, but until the basic components of any method can be put together properly, they have to be completely comprehended in the first place.

Therefore begin at the beginning by appreciating the step-by-step means by which God was assumed to descend the Tree towards a state of man, creating those same steps as He went. Although the terminology used is antique, its ideology is timeless. Note especially that above the Abyss there is only pure consciousness, while below it we encounter definite qualities followed by feelings and emotions concentrating into the penultimate Sphere of *Yesod* before being projected as a concrete whole at *Malchut* the kingdom, which we pray in the Lord's Prayer may come upon our Earth if and when His will is worked here as it is in Heaven or *Keter*. That is to say if ever we become as the Lord intended us to be in the first place, our work will be fulfilled and everything put into proper proportions again.

In order to enhance the notion of Spheres for visually oriented people, non-Semitic scholars of Kabbalah invented "personifications" to go with each Sphere which seemed suitable to the nature of each. From top to bottom, these are:

- 0 ***Ayn Sof Aur***. No visible image.
- 1 ***Keter***, Crown or summit. A bearded head of an ancient and crowned King seen in right profile. This was because it is said: "He is all right. In Him there is no left hand path."
- 2 ***Chochmah***, Wisdom. A wise looking elder holding a Book of the Law.
- 3 ***Binah***, Understanding. A throned matriarch, expressing comprehension.
- 4 ***Chesed***, Mercy. A cheerfully benevolent uncrowned but throned King.
- 5 ***Gevurah***, Severity. An armed warrior, usually in a chariot.
- 6 ***Tiferet***, Beauty. Three related figures which are really the same Divine King at different stages. First a young naked child (incarnation), second a crucified body (Sacrifice), third a crowned and robed Priest-King (Transformation). The Birth, Death and Resurrection of Sacred Kings.
- 7 ***Netzach***, Victory. A beautiful young woman with a palm branch.
- 8 ***Hod***, Glory. An hermaphrodite with the grace of both sexes.
- 9 ***Yesod***, Foundation. A naked and virile man.
- 10 ***Malchut***, the Kingdom. A young female representing Nature clothed as a Bride, because nature was regarded as the proper mate of Mankind symbolised by the *Shechinah* or visible signs of the presence of God on Earth, personified as an attractive female.

There are colour-associations with the Spheres of the Tree. Again there is a simple up and down and side to side logic to this. The left hand Pillar is Black, and called the Pillar of Severity, the right hand one being White and termed the Pillar of Mercy, while the Middle Pillar is Gold (or Yellow) and called the Pillar of Mildness. This illustrates the Golden Rule of life -

between extremities always choose the middle way. From top to bottom of the Tree the First Sphere is just a brilliance beyond being plain White. At Sphere 2, we have very light grey, and at Sphere 3, very dark grey. No colour above the Abyss at all since the three Spheres there are called the Supernals. See Figure 6.

Below the Abyss colours appear and the visible spectrum is shown by the lowest (Red) being on the left, the highest (Blue) on the right, and the centre (Yellow) being in the middle. Sphere 4, Mercy is Blue, Sphere 5 Red, and the central Sixth Sphere bright Yellow, or Sun coloured. Sphere 7 is Green (mixture of 4 and 6) while Sphere 8 is Orange (mixture of 6 and 5). The Ninth Sphere is a pale Moon-coloured semi-Yellow, with a very faint touch of Orange and Green mixed. At the Tenth Sphere comes a complete change to the Tree-colours of the four Seasons. Light green for leaves at Spring, dark green for Summer, russet at Autumn, and black for the bare branches of Winter as a complementary balance in the brilliance of *Keter*. This also brings in the time-element. The colours tell their own story with the Middle Pillar of Light shining first from space into our Sun, which reflects to the Moon and thence to our Earth for the enlightenment of man and our fellow creatures. So we see the direct line of light from God Itself with which we should try and align ourselves if everything is really going to mean anything worthwhile for us during our earth lives - and afterwards.

Altogether the study of Kabbalah is a mento-spiritual discipline which brings order and system into what could otherwise be a bewildering and baffling metaphysical mess. It puts priorities in the right places and provides a sense of proportion to spiritual subjects. Its use trains and makes both mind and soul work in harmony with each other for the sake of making the best out of life. It not only helps to develop character, but in so doing it assists evolution by advancing and expanding consciousness in those concerned with it. A conscientious Kabbalist becomes a better individual because of involvement with it. Kabbalah is not a religion in itself yet it inculcates an awareness of and a sense of companionship with God. It is not so much a philosophy as a way of life that inspires a philosophical outlook.

Most of all Kabbalah is a thinking and believing system of the soundest kind, enabling its practitioners to think and believe for themselves out of their own investigations and studies. We become as we think and believe. Kabbalah supplies us with a practical means of doing just that by giving us the tools for finding beliefs and thoughts. The raw material is our consciousness, while the concepts of the Kabbalistic system are both the implements and the book of instructions for using them to build our lives with if we want to find God in and for ourselves. A Do-it-Yourself kit for that specific purpose. The actual work itself has to be done by the people concerned, and at one time this was called the Great Work or Magnum Opus in Latin. That is surely true at all times. To discover a reason and purpose for being alive in the first place, then making both sense and sentience discover the maximum of meaning in Life relative to your own existence. The work of Kabbalah offers such an opportunity for those able to do it. It has never claimed to be either easy or effortless, but it does claim to be efficient and practical.

It should be fairly simple to see how God got down the Tree, but how God gets back again into Itself through Man's ascent is the other half of the Cosmic cycle. That is what we shall have to study when we have absorbed the basic details of the first fundamentals set out so briefly here. To help appreciate them still further, let us look over them again through their four-fold assembly system. The initial step is:

- 0 Non-Existence, Limitlessness, Nothing but Light. God's intention to **BE**.
- 1 The Crown or Summit of Creation. Pure Energy of Consciousness. The "big bang" behind being. Origination processes governed by the God-Aspect *Eh'yeh*

(a breathing, meaning "I AM"). Creative processes controlled by Archangel *Metatron* (Near Thy Throne). Formative processes by the angel order of the *Chaiot ha-Kodesh* (Holy Living Creatures, as a higher form of the Elements). Expressively controlled by the *Reshit ha-Gilgalim* (nebulae or first swirlings of matter). Humanly by the intentions of procreation. All this projects into:

- 2 Wisdom. Origination by the God-Aspect *YHVH* (*Yahweh*, meaning "I Will Be"). Creation by Archangel *Raziel* (Herald or Announcer of God). Formation by the angel order of the *Ofanim* (Wheels or Cycles of God). Expressively by the *Mazlot* (the Zodiac or "circle of Life"). Humanly by the supply of sperm cells in the male.
- 3 Understanding or intuition. Originatively processed by the God-Aspect *YHVH ELOHIM* (I will be Gods or Goddesses). Creatively by Archangel *Tzafkiel* (Watcher or Observer of God). Formatively by the angelic order of the *Aralim* (Thrones or seats). Expressively by the planet *Shabetai* (Saturn). Humanly by the supply of unfertilised ova or eggs in the female.

(here male and female forces meet, mate and fertilise. In a perfect condition of Creation this would result in a state of Beautiful Harmony as at Sphere 6, but since the object is a material world, this is pushed out of place by the act, and the gap between God and Man becomes the great Abyss, across which the life-stream goes to:)

- 4 Mercy or generosity. Origination governed by God-Aspect *EL* (The One). Creatively by Archangel *Tzadkiel* (Righteous of God). Formatively by the angel order of the *Chashmalim* (Brilliant Ones). Expressively by the planet *Tzedek* (Jupiter), traditional giver of good things. Humanly the development of male chromosomes in the foetus.
- 5 Severity or Economy. Origination governed by the God-Aspect *ELOHIM GIBUR* (God-Goddesses of Strength/Might). Creation by Archangel *Chamael* or *Samael* (Burner or Venom of God). Formation by the angelic order of *Serafim* (Fiery Serpents). Expressively by the planet *Madim* (Mars). Humanly by the development of female chromosomes in the foetus.
- 6 Harmony and Beauty. Here life is brought to balance Originatively by the God-Aspect *YHVH ELOAH VE-DA'AT* (I will be God-Goddess of Knowledge). Creatively by Archangel *Michael* (The God-like). Formatively by the angel order of the *Malachim* (Kings or Messengers). Expressively by *Shemesh* (the Sun) as life-supporting nucleus of our Solar System. It is said that the male-female chromosomes are combined into the best possible being here, and the ultimate physical sex of the individual decided.
- 7 Victory and Achievement. Originatively governed by the God-Aspect *YHVH TZVA'OT* (I will be Hosts). Creatively by Archangel *Auriel* (Light of God, sometimes identified with *Haniel* [Grace of God]). Formatively by the angel order of the *Elohim* God-Goddesses). Expressively by the planet *Nogah* (Venus). Humanly this is where emotions and feelings begin in the foetus.
- 8 Splendour, Glory and Honour. Originatively by the God-Aspect *ELOHIM TZVA'OT* (God-Goddesses of Hosts). Creatively by Archangel *Rafael* (Healer of God). Formatively by the angelic order of the *B'nay-Elohim* (Sons of the God-Goddesses). Expressively by the planet *Kochav* (Mercury or Hermes). Humanly

this is where the unborn get their intelligence and intellect from.

- 9 Foundation or Basis. Originatively by the God-Aspect *SHADAI EL CHAI* (Powerful/Almighty Lord of Life). Creatively by Archangel *Gavriel* (Virility of God). Formatively by the angelic order of the *Ishim* (Souls of Fire). Expressively by *Levanah* (the Moon), which is closest to this planet. This is the Sphere of familial influence from bloodlines, where dreams develop and everything comes together for emergence into independent life. Humanly this is the finishing process in the womb, and where we get our imagination from. After nine months, everything is projected into:
- 10 The Kingdom of this world. Originated by the God-Aspect of *ADONAI HA-ARETZ* (Lord of the Earth/Land). Created by Archangel *Sandalfon* (Co-Brother) who is the “other end” of *Metatron*. Formed by the angel order of the *Keruvim* (Winged Bulls). Expressed by the Life-Elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water (*Olam ha-Yesodot* - The Sphere of the Elements), the opposite numbers of the Holy Living Creatures at *Keter*. Humanly of course we are here as concrete Creations of Cosmic Consciousness going through incarnate lifetimes of experience.

All this is but a surface-scratch on the study of Kabbalah from a “God to Man” viewpoint. If you need to go deeper, you must know more deeply, and this can only be done with the effort to follow up this briefest outline of Kabbalistic principles. The only person who can determine what that would be worth, is **YOU**.

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PART TWO: THE WAY BACK

Having seen how the Kabbalists postulated God descending to our level, we are now faced with what is probably the more important ideology of how we are supposed to get back to God by a reversal of the process.

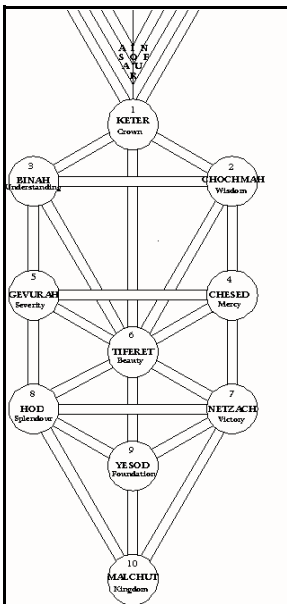


Figure 1 Paths on the Tree

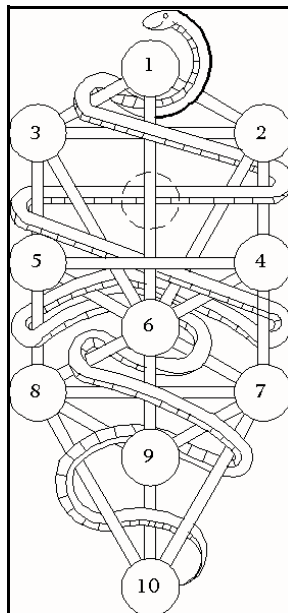


Figure 2 Serpent-Ascent of the Tree

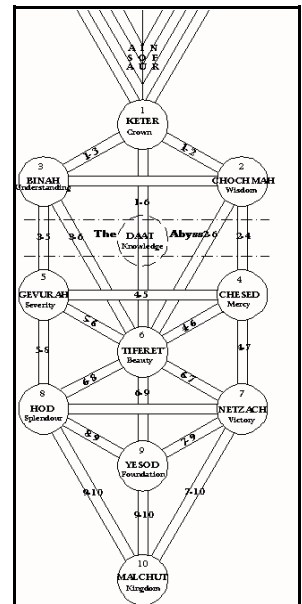


Figure 3 Numbering of the Paths

The Kabbalists certainly could not get back to God by the Lightning-Flash method, so another idea came to them - the Edenic serpent of the legendary Fall must show the ascent by a slow and careful crawling progression from branch to branch. These branches were represented by connecting the Spheres /together by direct Paths as per Figure 1. So the serpent-ascent meant going upwards and traversing each branch at least once until coming out clear on top at Zero, thus completing the course of Cosmos. See Figure 2.

Now came the problem of identifying the branches or Paths. The system was logically 0 - 1, 1 - 2, 1 - 3, 1 - 6, 2 - 3, and so on through the whole design. This gave an immediate association and location to the Paths. See Figure 3.

Each Path being a combination of two Spheres, we have to experience or know the conditions of life while being influenced by both energy-types. In esoteric practice each Path is visualized and meditated on with perhaps some specially formulated prayers as well until it becomes etched into the consciousness of the working Kabbalist deeply enough to act as a life-guide Godwards. This takes a fairly long time, and is known as Pathworking.

Again of course we are confronted with the right, left and centre method of considering the Tree, the traditional three-way system of looking at esoteric procedure in general.

1. The Orphic Way. Called so after Orpheus, patron of song, dance, and free expression. Orphically inclined people usually love gaiety and glamour while looking for God emotionally and artistically. They dislike hard and fast rules and regulations, preferring to follow what they consider natural impulses and inner instincts. They tend to associated with the White Pillar side of the Tree.
2. The Hermetic Way. After Hermes Trismegistus, patron of the Hermetic

Mysteries. These concern ordered rituals, intellectual pursuits, sciences, and exact procedures governed by definite rules and calculated formulae. Often regarded as the opposite of Orphic procedures. Rationality and logic is the control here. Hermetic people usually associate with the Black Pillar, the Pillar of Severity, of the Tree.

3. The Mystic Way or the Middle Way is the most difficult way of approaching Divinity. It is by sheer devotion and absolute dedication to the cause of cosmos. It takes a very great sense of self-sacrifice to follow this way, and almost no ordinary soul is capable of following this path of progress. Many start, then usually branch to one side or the other because they are safer and more comfortable than this demanding one - the Middle or Golden Pillar of the Tree.

Some humans are drawn naturally to one side or the other and remarkably few to the centre. Most of us use a bit of each in our practice, but the general impression is that the Middle Way is the best approach for a modern Westerner since it includes a workable percentage of both Ways.

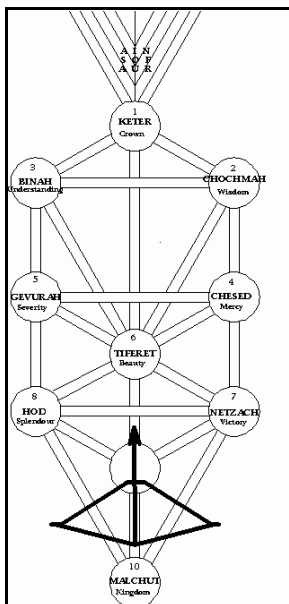


Figure 4 *Keshet* the Bow, and *Chetz* the Arrow

There are two other useful concepts to be considered about the Tree on our way back up it. One is that of a Bow, called *Keshet*, which fires a Golden Arrow, termed *Chetz*, straight up the Middle Pillar in the direction of divinity. This bow is thought to be just below the Ninth Sphere *Yesod*, and is symbolised by the rainbow, composed of all colours of the spectrum. See Figure 4. It represents projective energy drawn from every Sphere, and the arrow signifies pure aspiration deliberately aimed at some objective ahead of normal reach in this world - our advanced thoughts and intentions. The fruits of the Tree can sometimes be shot down by arrows rightly aimed from the “ambition and achievement level” before they can be reached by hand from the “rationality stages” higher up.

Another concept to consider is the “curtain” or “veil” called *Parochet*. This is a sort of imaginary screen drawn across the entire width of the Tree. It is frequently shown as being just before the Sixth Sphere, *Tiferet*, and the Opening of the higher-Self. It is thought of as being gauzy or sufficiently translucent to give hints of something behind it. It represents the limits of clear perception which we have to impose

between ourselves and more advanced consciousness. *Parochet* is a useful background for spiritual studies.

Most mythologies are full of warnings about mortals who dared to gaze on Gods and were destroyed in consequence. The Bible says: “No man has seen the face of God and lived.” The normal human mind can only stretch so far before breaking, and it needs protection against an ideology it may seek on one level and yet cannot cope with until developed on others. So the *Parochet* idea is both a warning and a protective hint to over-eager students of *Kabbalah*. Keep in immediate view only as much as can be dealt with comfortably and let the rest be screened-down to reasonable proportions. A sort of spiritual sunglasses idea which is both sensible and valuable.

This may be why the Tree was sometimes seen as the Two Faces of God, its upper part being the face of Macroprosopus or the great creation which it was unsafe for mortals to attempt viewing. The lower portion was the face of Microprosopus, or lesser creation, which is a representation of the greater but safe to study.

The general idea was that if God got down to our level by concentrating divine consciousness through the Tree-system, we might get back to God by a reverse-return procedure. Start with intense concentration on each Sphere and Path, then expand and widen-out our intensified awareness through contemplative states of consciousness until this state reached a realisation of the Absolute.

Practical Kabbalists discovered that they had invented a mathematical means of coding consciousness by means of the Paths which blended types of awareness like an artist blends colours or a musician blends sounds. By associating Path number names with the connecting *Sefirot*, they could call up that specific state of consciousness at will just by thinking of the Path number.

By associating different aspects of God with numerical-letters, Kabbalists came to find themselves in constant touch with deity whenever they thought, spoke, or wrote anything at all, and that was really the object of the whole exercise. To bring an awareness of divine energy into every intelligent activity of their lives. What is more, the Kabbalists were able to systematise this awareness so that it could be arranged rationally, logically and purposefully, with a definite and comprehensible current of that energy flowing through the whole. This allowed them to lift their lives all of the time towards the ultimate objective, the Godhead. See Table 1.

Table 1: Paths of the Tree with Tarot Associations

PATH NUMBERS	CONNECTING SEFIROT	TAROT CARD
1 - 2	Crown - Wisdom	Hierophant
1 - 3	Crown - Understanding	Hermit
1 - 6	Crown - Beauty	Star
2 - 3	Wisdom - Understanding	Judgment
2 - 4	Wisdom - Mercy	Emperor
2 - 6	Wisdom - Beauty	Temperance
3 - 5	Understanding - Severity	Death
3 - 6	Understanding - Beauty	Hanged Man
4 - 5	Mercy - Severity	Justice
4 - 6	Mercy - Beauty	Strength
4 - 7	Mercy - Victory	Empress
5 - 6	Severity - Beauty	Blasted Tower
5 - 8	Severity - Glory	Devil
6 - 7	Beauty - Victory	Lovers
6 - 8	Beauty - Glory	Chariot
6 - 9	Beauty - Foundation	Sun
7 - 8	Victory - Glory	Wheel of Fortune
7 - 9	Victory - Foundation	Priestess
7 - 10	Victory - Kingdom	The World
8 - 9	Glory - Foundation	Magician
8 - 10	Glory - Kingdom	The Fool
9 - 10	Foundation - Kingdom	Moon

Kabbalists were not content to drift towards divinity like most of mankind. They wanted an organised and arranged scheme of doing so, and moreover a scheme of which they were intentionally aware. Whatever God may have planned for them, they wanted not only to know about it, but to participate in its calculations and co-operate in the action.

The mental manoeuvres of the Kabbalists sharpened their wits to a point where they became capable of coping with every kind of human contingency. Exercises in the control and application of consciousness are never wasted and this was what the practice of Kabbalah amounted to. A discipline directing all their energies toward divinity. So, starting from their human status in this mundane world, Kabbalists steadily worked their way back by the Serpent-Paths of their Tree, a Path at a time. Tree-progress is a model of patient pursuit and typifies the ideal Kabbalistic approach of higher forms of life.

Managing the methodology of the serpent approach to the Tree was the hardest. Once that was mastered, the rest became much a matter of repetition and reiteration. Eventually it became possible to select any Path required, and successively more and more Paths simultaneously, until in theory it should be possible to work them all together. Such was the ambition of expert practitioners. The probability is many developed mental skills of surprising ability and adroitness. Once wits are set working in productive patterns, it is surprising how far human intelligence can travel in Inner directions. The Tree of Life is a positive pattern for those adopting it for their pursuit of its spiritual nourishment.

The general method of Pathworking was preceded by meditations and perhaps ritual procedures on the Ten Spheres until clear and concise ideas of each could easily be called into consciousness by means of their names alone. Only when this could be done with speed and efficiency would a worker progress to the individual Paths. Many months might elapse before they were considered ready for that stage. When the Sphere work was accomplished, they would tackle the bottom three Paths, usually commencing with the middle one. It is fairly close to normal consciousness yet should impart an awareness of lift-off from Earth levels towards less material and more imaginative conditions of life.

In Pathworking it is not so much a dream-state which is required, but the control of that state by whoever is working. Images and impressions will arise quite naturally by themselves, and they are to obey the commands of their controller absolutely. Efforts have to be made repeatedly in order to obtain this degree of control, but however long this may take, no further Paths should be tackled before a reasonable degree of Image-obedience is enforced here.

It should be remembered this control must extend to time, space, and events, the main components of cosmos. That is to say any image or creation of the Path-traveller's consciousness must stay in duration for as long as intended and remain exactly how its creator directs. Moreover, every exercise should be rational and reasonable with a sound explanation for every happening.

Later, the 31st Path is approached. *Malchut* to *Hod*, 10 to 8. Here Kabbalists begin again with the familiar condition of their current ambient circumstances and advance towards the nearest inner state of Glory or ambition. This is the Path of glorification or honour which makes life in this world worth while and sometimes wonderful.

Next of course, the 30th path begins again in this world and ascends as far as *Netzach*, the eighth concept of Victory on the Tree. Everyone wants to achieve something in and with their lives. Anything which counts as a Victory gained by struggles with all the opposition encountered in earth-life. Intentions of achieving such Victory over the worst side of ones own nature should be very much included here. Anything of a good over bad nature.

These three Paths are those which start us from this physical world on our way back to God. So, stage by stage, a Path at a time, does our serpent-symbol take us back up the Tree. It is true that all these journeys are purely imaginative, but never under-estimate the faculty of imagination. Imagination has led mankind to our present place in creation and will lead us

further in the future. It has been said “Without vision the people will perish” and “Your young men shall see visions while your old men dream dreams.”

All Tree-Path exercises are structured efforts at the control of imaginative consciousness leading us towards the energy of existence itself. The use of the Sphere-numbered Paths and Tarot assignments calls up conditions of consciousness for the individual Path. It is the immediate recall through these simple summoning symbols that is important.

What Kabbalists have sought is a common language with God. Therefore in the Path work they approached their concept of deity first of all through Spheres-numbers identified with specific aspects or projections of divine power, and secondly by verbal arrangements such as Tarot Card names which could be equally identified with combinations of those aspects in action. In this way, Kabbalists sought lives in which everything was connected to God through some channel or another, and they wanted to play an intentionally conscious part in such a programme. They became aware of their position as active agents in the scheme of life instead of remaining inert observers and endurers.

Eventually Kabbalism extended into almost every field of esoteric experimentation. Theurgy and talismanic magic became incorporated into its curriculum as also did astrology and other arcane activities. The 22 trumps of the Tarot cards were well aligned with the Paths of the Tree, and the numbered cards coincided with the Four Worlds of the Ten Spheres. Thenceforth the Tree became a sort of storage system for all the esoterica of our Western Inner Tradition. It has since turned into a major symbol representing practically every variety of our occult specialist studies, with the possible exception of the neo-pagan movement which usually finds it too formal and complex.

Once the connections of the Tarot with the Tree had been established, very definite meanings could be attached to them providing they were properly used as indicators of divine intentions which left human enquirers free to determine their own reactions with these. The Tarot symbols are archetypal and designed to cover practically all contingencies of life on this earth and the types of people involved in them. Interpretation of their combinations is a matter of judgment coupled with intuition. The broad outline is usually clear enough to make meaning for anyone, or at least enough to give general guidance to sincere seekers. So this oracular function of the Tree through Tarot became part of its purpose in relative recent times. Originally the consultation of Oracles had nothing to do with telling the future at all. It was intended as a means of enquiring what the will of God required humans to do. A clarification of consciousness in the puzzling or perplexing conditions of living. Something to decide a course of action when humans were at their wits end.

Possibly the Tree of Life's increasing importance is due more to Western Gentile scholars who adopted and adorned it with so much of their thinking than to the Hebrew inventors. At one time the Tree-design was only an obscure item of Hebrew occult philosophy which could be classed as heretical rather than Orthodox. The bulk of early Kabbalists were concerned with calculations and speculations about orders of spirits and astrological influences which they had inherited from Assyrian and Egyptian sources. This involved other celestial phenomena and everything related to early cosmic curiosity among mankind. The Western Kabbalist has been concerned with what it does and how it works.

If anyone should enquire what use the Tree of Life and Kabbalism might be in our modern times, the simplest answer is that this study sets out a scheme whereby God comes down to Man by powers and principles, and shows us how we may return to God by means of pursuits and practices. It is not any specific religion but a method of arrangement and application. Pure methodology which could be applied to whichever religious form of beliefs might be followed.

God is God by any name humans may accept. Conscious approach to God remains exactly what it is whether termed prayer, meditation, contemplation, invocation or anything else. Energy is energy regardless of type or other limitations. These are the eternal verities which genuine Kabbalah is trying to systematise and present as a fundamental formulary which can be followed comprehensibly by justifiably inquisitive individuals expecting far more from life than a material basis with a disintegrative end to it eventually.

A few centuries back, this investigative instinct in Western humans was called in certain Christian circles the Quest of the Holy Grail, or more properly *Sangreal*, interpreted as blood-royal. Kings have a crown above their heads and a kingdom beneath their feet. Such indeed are the symbols of the Tree from top to bottom. Our striving for the *Sangreal* is what the Tree of Life should encourage us to try as a major motivation for living.

(A Hebrew/English Glossary continues on the page following the copyright notice)

THE END

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Hebrew/English Glossary to “Condensation of Kabbalah”

1. General Terms

Aur	אור	Light
Ayn	אין	Nothing
Chetz	חץ	Arrow
Kabbalah	קבל	To receive; Tradition
Keshet	קשת	Bow
Parochet	פרכת	Curtain; Veil
Shechinah	שכינה	Divine Presence; Feminine counterpart of God.
Sof	סוף	Infinite

2. The Tree of Life

Keter	כתר	Crown , Summit
Chochmah	חכמה	Wisdom
Binah	בינה	Understanding
(Da'at)	דעת	(Knowledge)
Chesed	חסד	Mercy, Benevolence
Gevurah	גבורא	Severity
Tiferet	תפארת	Beauty, Harmony
Netzach	נצח	Victory, Achievement
Hod	הוד	Glory, Honour
Yesod	יסוד	Foundation
Malchut	מלכות	Kingdom

3. The Four Worlds

Atzilut	אצילות	World of Emanation or Origination
Briah	בריאה	World of Creation
Yetzirah	יריה	World of Formation
Assiah	עשיה	World of Action or Expression

4. Divine Names

Eh'yeh	אהיה	I am
YHVH	יהוה	I am, I was, I will be
YHVH Elohim	יהוה אלהים	I will be Gods or Goddesses
EL	אל	The One
Elohim Gibur	אלהים גבור	God-Goddesses of Strength/Might
YHVH Eloah ve-Da'at	יהוה אלוה ודעת	I will be God-Goddess of Knowledge
YHVH Tsva'ot	יהוה צבאות	I will be Hosts
Elohim Tsva'ot	אלהים צבאות	God-Goddesses of Hosts
Shadai El Chai	אל חי שדי	Powerful/Almighty Lord of Life
Adonai ha-Arets	אדני הארץ	Lord of the Earth/Land

5. Archangels

Metatron	מטטרון	Near Thy Throne
Raziel	רזיאל	Herald or Announcer of God
Tsafkiel	צפקיאל	Watcher or Observer of God
Tsadkiel	צדקיאל	Righteous of God
Chamael Samael	כמאל סמאל	Burner of God Venom of God
Michael	מיכאל	The God-like
Auriel Haniel	אוראל האניאל	Light of God Grace of God
Rafael	רפאל	Healer of God
Gavriel	גוריאל	Virility of God
Sandalfon	סנדלפון	Co-Brother

6. Angels

Chaiot ha-Kodesh	חיות הקדש	Holy Living Creatures, as a higher form of the Elements
Ofanim	אופנים	Wheels or Cycles of God
Aralim	אראלים	Thrones or seats
Chashmalim	חשמלים	Brilliant Ones
Serafim	שרפים	Fiery Serpents
Malachim	מלכים	Kings or Messengers
Elohim	אלהים	God-Goddesses
B'nay-Elohim	בני אלהים	Sons of the God-Goddesses
Ishim	אשים	Souls of Fire
Keruvim	כרובים	Winged Bulls

7. Cosmic Associations

Reshit ha-Gilgalim	ראשית הגלגלים	nebulae, first swirlings of matter
Mazlot	מזלות	the Zodiac or circle of Life
Shabetai	שבתאי	Saturn
Tzedek	צדק	Jupiter
Madim	מדים	Mars
Shemesh	שמש	Sun
Nogah	נוגה	Venus
Kochav	כוכב	Mercury
Levanah	לבנה	Moon
Olam ha-Yesodot	עולם היסודות	The Sphere of the Elements

