

The Tree of Life

The Tree of Life, OTz ChiIM (=228), Autz Chaiim, is a Qabalistic diagram based upon the following statement, which is made at the very beginning of the Sepher Yetzirah, or Book of Formation:

“In thirty-two mysterious paths of wisdom did the Lord write... He created the Universe by the three forms of expression: Numbers, Letters and Words.”

In Lesson 8 you received the names of the twenty-two Paths of Wisdom corresponding to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In the preceding lesson you were told the commoner names of the ten Sephiroth, the numbers, and the names of the Paths to which they correspond. The purpose of this lesson is to explain the formation of the diagram in which these ideas are combined, so that their relations to each other are graphically represented.

This diagram has been called “a key to all things.” The reason why it may be so described will perhaps be easier to grasp if I quote a passage from Knut Stenring’s notes to the Sepher Yetzirah (p.36 of his translation):

“In the Biblical narrative of the creation (Gen. 1.), the name of Elohim is mentioned 32 times. 32=LB in Hebrew characters, and signifies ‘Heart’, a symbol of spirituality and intelligence.

“Considering the Mind of man as a faint reflex of the Universal Mind, which is God it follows that any human idea is the vague image of a perfect idea which is of God. Man endeavors to idealize this dim mind-picture, and the result is a symbol which, so far as human intelligence can reach, will be in the likeness of the perfect idea. Man cannot think without the use of symbols.

“The 32 Paths of Wisdom are 32 notions which comprehend the whole creation. Under these fundamental ideas all that exists is classified. When the Lord wrote a ‘Number’ or a ‘Letter’, in each of these paths forces were created ‘from’ which everything was formed. By means of their symbols - otherwise ‘Numbers’ and ‘Letters’ - these forces became apprehensible to the human mind.”

You will remember that the numerical symbol of the undifferentiated Life-Power is 0. Hindus say it is to be described by negatives only, and Qabalists imply the same idea when they choose the following names (which you have already learned) to represent 0:

a) AIN, No-Thing. The most abstract idea of universal subsistence. This is the “first veil” of the Unknowable, because NO-THING does not define THAT WHICH IS, being only a negation of all possible notions of quantity, quality or mass.

b) AIN SVP, En Soph. No Limit, the Boundless. This is the idea of pure space, extending to infinity in every direction. It is also the conception of limitless potency, of latent energy which cannot be diminished, no matter how great the demands upon it. It is the denial, furthermore, of any mental limitation. Ain Soph is the boundless possibility of knowing. Finally, it is the denial of the limitation of time. The Boundless Subsistence unites past, present and future in an eternal now.

c) AIN SVP AVR, En Soph Aur. This “third veil” of the 0 declares the identity of the ONE REALITY which is NOTHING with infinite and eternal radiant energy. AIN SVP AVR, however, is not physical light. It is the living radiance which medieval adepts named L.V.X., transcending all our physically influenced ideas of what light is.

The 0 and its three veils, are not included among the Sephiroth. These are the primary modes of existence, the first self-representations to Itself of Itself by means of which the Life-Power seemingly projects Itself into manifestation. The Sephiroth are names for the “standing-forth.” AIN, AIN SVP and AIN SVP AVR are names which indicate our inability to picture or define Subsistence, “that which stands under and behind” all that exists.

At the beginning of a cycle of manifestation the 0 concentrates itself at a point within its limitless subsistence. From this point the Numbers or Sephiroth seem to emanate; but a Gnostic writer tells us, “they do not really emanate.”

This means that because the universal subsistence is infinite, there can be no point in space where it is not. Consequently, though the Sephiroth seem to be projected into existence from within the depths of subsistence, they

are not really projected, because there is no “outside” for them to be projected into. The same thought is behind the Christian doctrine, “In Him we live, and move, and have our being.”

KETHER, the Crown, is the number 1, and represents the self-concentration of the Life-Power. Hence it is sometimes named NQDH PShVTh, Nequdah Peshutah, the Small Point or the Smooth Point - the latter probably being the best rendering, as suggesting the absence of friction. NQDH PShVTh = 945, which includes the digits of Justice (5), Mercy (4), and Foundation (9). The sum of these digits is 18, which you should study with the aid of the dictionary in the preceding lesson. The final reduction is 9.

Other names for Kether are ThTh ZL, Tath Zal (= $837 = 8 + 3 + 7 = 18$), the Profuse Giver; NQDH RAShVNH, Nequdah Rashunah (= $721 = 10 = 1$), the Primordial Point; RVM MOLH, Rom Meolah (= $391 = 13$, which see in the dictionary), the Inscrutable Height, a name showing that the First Existence or beginning of the creative process transcends our intellectual grasp; OLIVN, Olion (= $166 = 13$), Most High, which conveys a like suggestion; RISHA DLA, Risha Dalah (= $546 = 15$, which see in the dictionary), The Head which is NOT, a name which directs attention to the fact that Kether, although as it is the beginning, is not really the true “Head” or Source of existence, which is 0; ARIK ANPIN, Arikh Anpin (= 231 plus $191 = 422 = 8$), the Vast Countenance, or Macroprosopus. “Of Him it is said,” writes Mathers in *The Kabbalah Unveiled* page 24, “that He is partly concealed (in the sense of His connection with the negative existence) and partly manifest (as a positive Sephirah).”

To explain the symbolism of Macroprosopus in detail is needless here. It is said to be reflected into the Lesser Countenance, or Microprosopus, which we shall encounter presently.

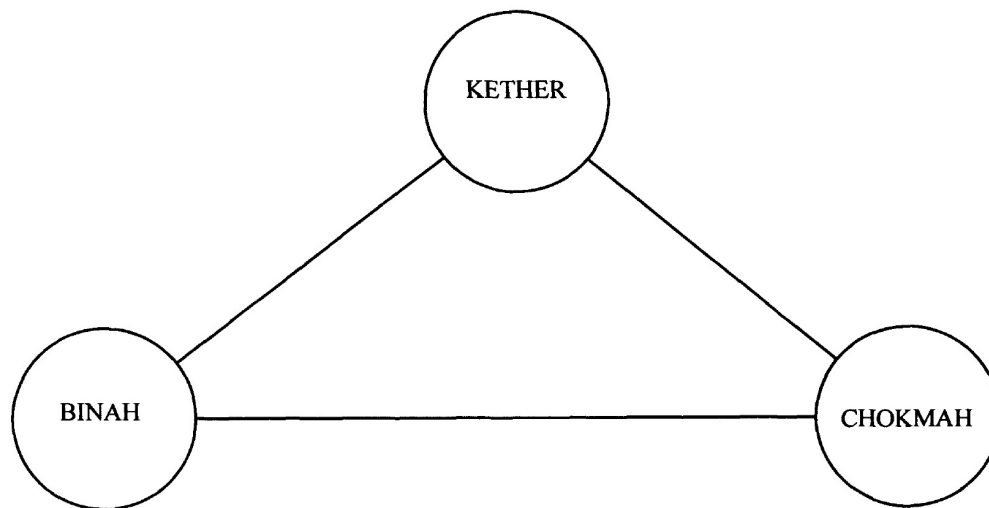
CHOKMAH, the second Sephirah, has the following additional titles:

KChMH, Kachmah (=73, the word being written with the same letters as ChKMH, Chokmah), the Power of Formation; AB, Ab, the Father. The divine name IH, Jah or Yah is assigned to Chokmah.

BINAH, the third Sephirah, is also called:

AMA, Ama (=42) the dark, sterile Mother: AIMA, Aima (=52) the bright, fertile Mother; and KVRSIA, Korsia (=297 = 18). Note also that the first two letters of KVRSIA add up to 26 = IHVH, Tetragrammaton, that the next two add to 260, or 10×26 , suggesting the multiplication of the power of Tetragrammaton through the ten Sephiroth, that Yod follows these two pairs of letters, as if to emphasize the number 10, and that the end of the word is Aleph, to indicate unity. It will pay you to analyze this word letter by letter. The divine name assigned to Binah is ALHIM, Elohim (=86 = 14 = 5).

Kether, Chokmah and Binah constitute what is termed the SUPERNAL TRIAD, which is represented as a triangle, with its apex in Kether, Chokmah at the right end of its base, and Binah at the left, thus:



The second triad of Sephiroth is the reflection of the first, and consists of:

CHESED, the fourth Sephirah, also called GDVLH, Gedulah (=48), Magnificence. Literally, Gedulah means “mighty acts” and thus denotes “power in action”. The divine name of the 4th Sephirah is AL, El (31), the Mighty One.

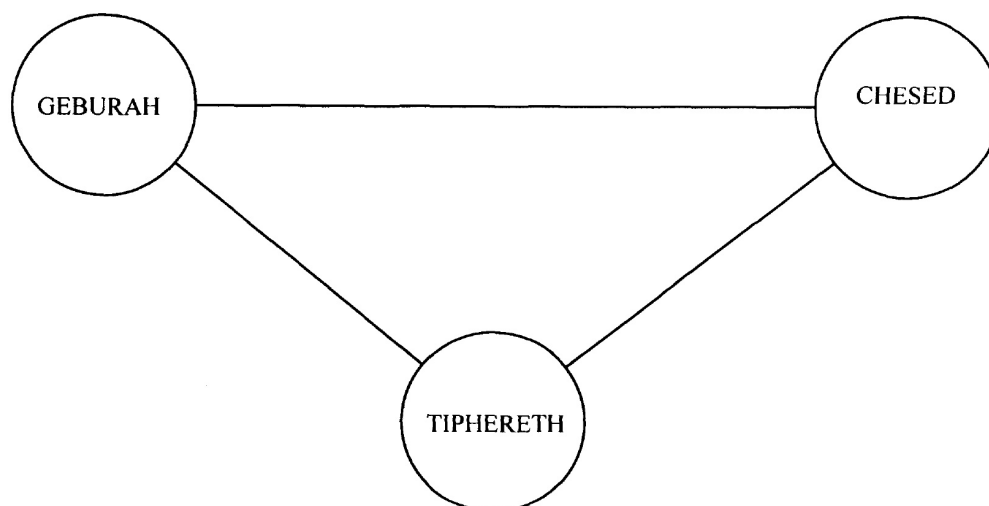
GEBURAH, whose other names, PACHAD and DEEN have been previously explained, is the second member of the second Sephirotic triad. Its divine name is ALHIM GBVR, Elohim Gibor (=86 plus 211 = 297 = 18).

TIPHARETH, the sixth Sephirah, is also called MLK (=90), Melek, the King, and ZOIR ANPIN, Zauir Anpin (=478 = 19 = 10 = 1). You have already learned that Tiphareth is called Ben, the Son (by inference, the Son of the Father, Chokmah, and the Mother, Binah). As Zauir Anpin, the Lesser Countenance, or Microprosopus, Tiphareth is regarded as the reflection or mirroring of Kether, the Vast Countenance. As the Sun, whose sphere is in Tiphareth, manifests the Life-Power in visible form, so does BEAUTY, wherever we see it, make known to us better than anything else, the real aim or tendency of the Primal Will. This, without any mystification or reserve whatever, is the central teaching of the Qabalah concerning the reflection of the Vast Countenance into the Lesser Countenance. Whoso can follow this clue and penetrate to the heart of the teaching here set down in so few simple words is already a perfected practical occultist.

The Second Triad is represented by a triangle which is the reverse of the first. Note that CHESED reflects CHOKMAH, that GEBURAH is the reflection of BINAH, and that TIPHARETH is the reflection of KETHER.

Thus Tiphareth the Lesser Countenance has the divine name ALVH VDOTh, Eloah Va-Da'ath (=42, the number of AMA, plus 480 = 522), which means Power and Knowledge, while to Kether is assigned the name AHIH, Ehyeh, meaning simply "Existence", undefined and as yet undifferentiated.

This is the second Triad:



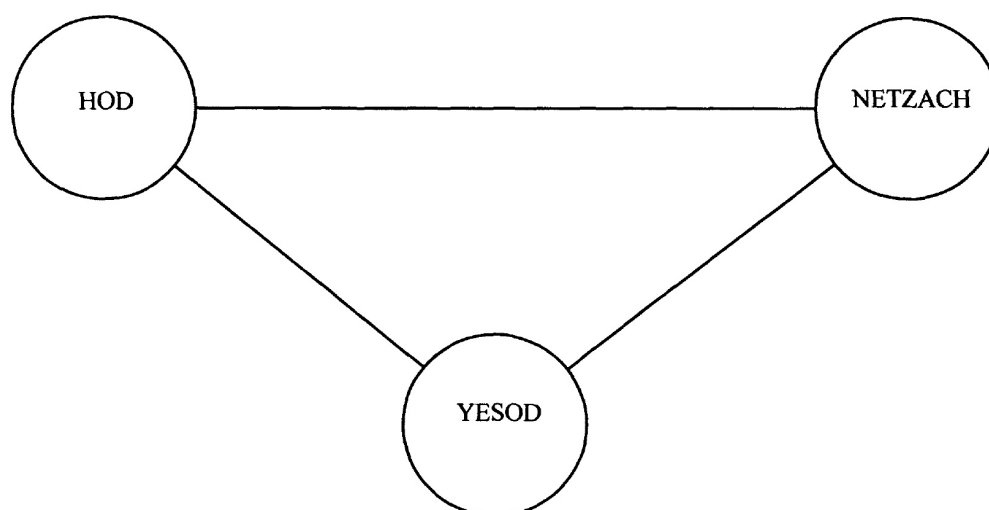
The Third Triad is composed of the seventh, eighth and ninth Sephiroth:

NETZACH, Victory, reflects CHESED, and has the divine name IHVH TzBAVTh, Tetragrammaton (Jehovah) Tzabaoth (= 525), Jehovah of the Armies, or Jehovah of Hosts.

HOD, Splendor, reflects GEBURAH, and has the divine name ALHIM TzBAVTh (= 585), Elohim Tzabaoth, the gods of the armies, or Gods of Hosts.

YESOD, the Foundation or Basis, reflects TIPHARETH, and has the additional title, TzDIQ-ISVD-OVLM, Tzaddik-Yesod-Ohlahm (= 204 plus 80 plus 146 = 430), The Righteous is the Foundation of the World. The divine name is ShDI AL ChI, Shaddai El Chai (=314 plus 31 plus 18 = 363), The Mighty Invisible One.

The third Triad of the Sephiroth is represented by the following triangle:



Dependent from it, and synthesizing or summing up the whole of the preceding Sephiroth, is MALKUTH, the Kingdom. As said in the preceding lesson, Malkuth is also called the Bride, the Queen and the Virgin. She is the Bride of Microprosopus, the Lesser Countenance, or Tiphareth, the Spouse and Counterpart of the Son. Another name for her is ShKINH, Shekinah (=385), which corresponds by Gematria to OShIH, Assiah, the World of Matter, and to ShPH, to hold, to contain, to take up; word, speech,

language. Consider the sequence of letters in ShPH - TOOTH-MOUTH-WINDOW. By referring to the lesson on the alphabet you will see that Shin corresponds to the Primal Fire which is the Life Breath of the Gods; Peh represents the Rajas quality, or Mars vibration; Heh, by Yetziratic attribution, stands for Sight or Vision. Thus ShPH represents the descent of the Primal Fire (Sh) into expression (Utterance, Peh) through the self-contemplation of the Life-Power (Heh, Seeing). The Kingdom is the “language” of the Creative Life-Power.

The three Triads, and Malkuth, their synthesis, are combined in the Otz ChIIM, Autz Chaiim (literally, “Tree of the Living Ones”, to remind us that each Sephirah is an aspect of the One Living Intelligence).

Several examples of this diagram accompany this lesson. All of them are constructed according to a particular geometrical plan. This construction is based upon an arrangement of four intersecting circles, having a common diameter. Figure 1 (on the following page) shows the four circles. Figure 2 is the Tree of Life. The common diameter (Figure 1) is from 0 to 10. The points numbered from 1 to 10 are taken as centers of circles similarly numbered. These are the positions of the ten Sephiroth:

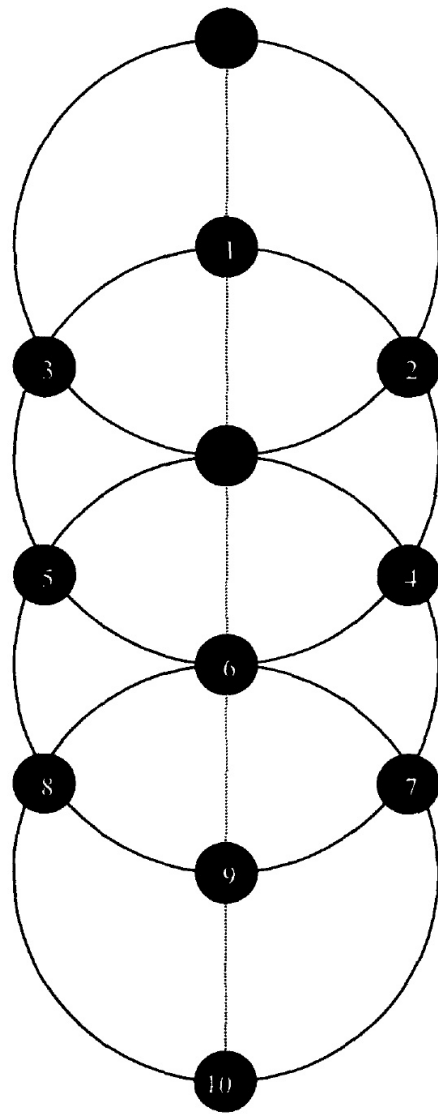


Figure 1

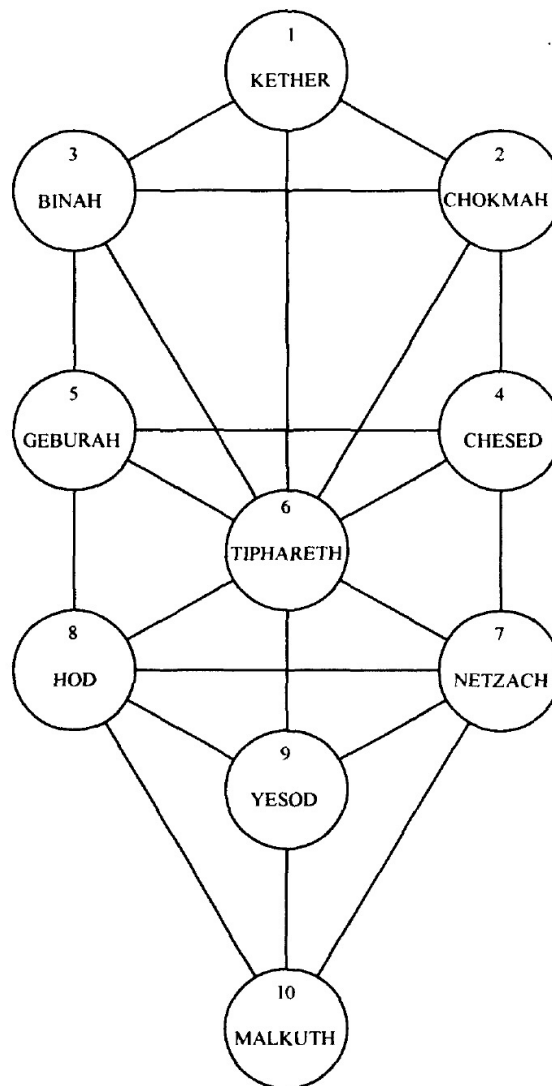


Figure 2

To construct Figure 1 FOUR circles are required; the common diameter is divided into FIVE parts; THREE circles are those which mark the positions of the Sephiroth. In the four circles TWELVE points are specifically located by the intersections of the circles with each other and with their common diameter.

These are the sacred numbers which we have already had to consider in connection with the Pythagorean Triangle, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, and their sum, TWELVE. At present you need only remember that because the

diagram of the Tree of Life is based upon a construction which emphasizes these numbers, that construction is one of many links in the chain of evidence connecting the Qabalah with the Wisdom of Egypt.

The first of the diagrams accompanying this lesson gives the names of the Sephiroth, the numbers of the 32 Paths, and the positions of the Hebrew letters on the Tree of Life. Learn this diagram first, so that you can draw it without referring to the copy given here.

The second diagram is that of the Cosmic Tree. It gives the cosmic meanings of the different Sephiroth, and the planetary, zodiacal, and elementary attributions of the paths of the letters, according to the Sepher Yetzirah.

The third diagram provides the Divine Names attributed to each of the 10 Sephiroth. It is suggested that the serious student color many such diagrams as described in the following paragraphs.

The White of KETHER symbolizes the undifferentiated brilliance of the Limitless Light. The Opalescent Gray of CHOKMAH (shot through with flashes of rainbow tints when seen clairvoyantly) symbolizes the splitting up of the white light of the Primal Unity into its lines of tendency, or the recognition by Wisdom of the limitless possibilities of the Primal Will (in painting this, simply mix Black and White to make Gray. Unless you are an expert, you will be unable to make anything like an adequate representation of the opalescent effect of this first differentiation). The Black of BINAH is really a mixture of the three primaries, with a predominance of Blue. It represents a slowing-down of the rainbow vibrations of Chokmah. From its seeming darkness are differentiated three hues, the primary pigments, assigned to the Second Triad.

As said before, the Second Triad reflects the first. The Gray of CHOKMAH is reflected into the Blue of CHESED, Sphere of Jupiter. The Red concealed in BINAH, Sphere of Saturn, is mirrored in GEBURAH, Sphere of Mars. The White Brilliance of KETHER is reflected as the equilibrating Yellow of TIPHARETH, Sphere of the Sun.

The colors of the Third Triad are the secondaries. Each is a mixture of two hues of the Second Triad. The Blue of CHESED and the Yellow of TIPHARETH make the Green of NETZACH; the Red of GEBURAH and the

Yellow of TIPHARETH are mixed in the Orange of HOD; and the Blue of CHESED combines with the Red of GEBURAH to make the Violet of YESOD. Thus NETZACH is the complement of GEBURAH, HOD is the complement of CHESED, and YESOD is the complement of TIPHARETH, for each of these pairs of Sephiroth is also a pair of complementary colors.

Observe that HOD, sphere of Mercury, is the same color as Gemini, the sign ruled by Mercury; that TIPHARETH, sphere of the Sun, is the same color as Leo, ruled by the Sun; and that CHESED, sphere of Jupiter, is the color of the path of Sagittarius, ruled by Jupiter. This indicates that we are to understand that the spheres of the planets are more in the nature of the signs of the zodiac than like the planets themselves. The exception seems to be the sphere of the Moon, YESOD, which is Violet, whereas Cancer, the sign ruled by the Moon, is Yellow-Orange, and Violet is the color of the sign Aquarius, ruled by Uranus. Observe, however, that the Violet of Aquarius is complementary to the Yellow of its ruler, Uranus. At this point in your work I cannot say more than that this seeming inconsistency has a rational explanation which gives a key to certain practical operations of considerable importance. I could give you the explanation if I would, but I feel that to do so would be unwise. And at the risk of seeming to some of my readers to indulge in mystery mongering, I may add that what I know concerning this matter was imparted to me under a pledge of secrecy, a pledge which seems to me to have more than sufficient justification. On the other hand, the nature of that pledge is such that I am at liberty to pass on the explanation to any person who is able to ask the right kind of a question. For whoever, by independent thought or investigation does arrive at the point where he can formulate a sufficiently definite opinion to ask such a question will also have come to see why reserve is demanded, and will be ready to observe due caution in passing on his knowledge.

The four segments of MALKUTH represent the elements, Fire, Water, Air and Earth. The colors are derived from the hues of the Third Triad. The Orange of HOD and the Violet of YESOD make Russet, assigned to Fire because Red predominates therein. The Green of NETZACH mixed with the Orange of HOD produces Citrine, with an excess of Yellow, the color of Air. The Violet of YESOD and the Green of NETZACH make Slate, in which the

Blue of Water predominates. The color of Earth is apparently Black, but it is really like the color of the Sphere of Saturn, for it is a mixture of all the hues of the Third Triad.

The fourth diagram shows the divine names of the Ten Sephiroth. The fifth diagram gives the names of the 32 Paths of Wisdom, and in studying this it should be borne in mind that the ten Sephiroth as well as the 22 letters are paths. The sixth diagram indicates the psychological attributions of the Sephiroth, the pairs of opposites corresponding to the double letters, the qualities represented by the mother letters, and the functions corresponding to the simple letters.

Besides the arrangement of Triads before mentioned, the Sephiroth on the Tree of Life are grouped by Qabalists in other ways.

One of these is called 'The Three Pillars'. The three Sephiroth on the right side of the Tree, CHOKMAH, CHESED and NEZTACH, are regarded as masculine potencies, and they constitute the Pillar of MERCY, named after CHESED. The three corresponding Sephiroth on the left side of the Tree, BINAH, GEBURAH and HOD, form the Pillar of Severity, composed of feminine potencies, and named after GEBURAH. The four Sephiroth in the center of the Tree, KETHER, TIPHARETH, YESOD and MALKUTH are said to be androgyne, equilibrating potencies, forming the Pillar of Mildness, named after TIPHARETH.

What has just been said about the masculine, feminine and androgyne natures of the Sephiroth, however, is more or less exoteric. For it is taught also that every Sephirah is feminine or receptive, in its relation to those that precede it on the Tree, and masculine or projective, in relation to those that follow it. Thus every Sephirah is androgyne, or partaking of both masculine and feminine qualities. This is true of KETHER and MALKUTH also, for KETHER is receptive in its relation to AIN SVP AVR, and MALKUTH is projective or masculine when considered as the beginning of the Path of Return. Thus it is written, 'Kether is in Malkuth, and Malkuth is in Kether, but after another manner'.

The connecting lines, occupied by the letters, are channels between the Sephiroth. Each has its origin in one Sephirah and its completion in another. The 11th Path, for example, is rooted in KETHER, completed in

CHOKMAH, and partakes of the influence of both.

Again, each Sephirah is a point of balance between two or more paths of the letters. Thus KETHER equilibrates the influences of the 11th, 12th and 13th Paths, which proceed from it.

Now, it is written: 'The living creatures ran and returned', and the Qabalah teaches that this refers to the involution and evolution of the Life-Power, as diagrammed on the Tree of Life. The whole process is the outcome of the whirling motion set up by the concentration of the Life-Power upon itself. It is on this account that the Sephiroth are represented as circles or wheels.

The whirling motion of the Primal Light runs Out, or descends into manifestation, from KETHER to MALKUTH; and this is the involution of Spirit into Matter (Name and Form). The same influence returns from MALKUTH back to KETHER, and this is the ascent of the Life-Power, the evolution which carries us back to the Source, away from the limitations of Name and Form.

Therefore in studying the Tree of Life, we should remember that each path is a path of ascent or evolution as well as a path of descent or involution. Thus we may say of CHOKMAH that it receives the influence of KETHER through the 11th Path, and distributes it to BINAH through the 14th, to TIPHARETH through the 15th, and to CHESED through the 16th. This statement describes what happens during involution. If we wish to describe what goes on in the process of evolution or ascent, we say that CHOKMAH receives from TIPHARETH the influence of Mediation, through the 15th Path; from CHESED the influence of Measurement and Order, through the 16th path; and from BINAH the influence of Sanctification, through the 14th Path. It then synthesizes these influences.

The Qabalah also represents the Sephiroth as operating in seven planes, as follows:

- 1st Plane: KETHER
- 2nd Plane: CHOKMAH and BINAH
- 3rd Plane: CHESED and GEBURAH
- 4th Plane: TIPHARETH
- 5th Plane: NETZACH and HOD

- 6th Plane: YESOD
- 7th Plane: MALKUTH

Again, it is held that every Sephirah includes all the others. Diagrams of the Tree sometimes indicate this by inserting a miniature Tree in each of the ten circles. The meaning is that the Sephiroth are not really separate. They are only separated by our thinking. They are really aspects of a single Reality, and their differentiation is part of the illusion from whose deceptive power true INITIATION enables us to escape.

The way of liberation is UP the Tree of Life. It is the Path of Return, the retracing of the Way of Outgoing. In a deep occult sense the Parable of the Prodigal Son is an allegory of Manifestation. The Son is the WORD or Logos, the SON whose Sephirah is TIPHARETH. The Elder Brother in the Parable is ADAM QADMON, the Protogonos (first-born). ADAM QADMON is represented by the Sephiroth in their totality, and is particularly associated with KETHER, the Vast Countenance, or Macroprosopus. The SON who goes out and returns is the Lesser Countenance, Microprosopus, TIPHARETH. That Son is the consciousness of man, as you will see by reference to the sixth diagram. For it is Ruach, the personal aspect of consciousness, the seat of 'good and evil', including the Sephiroth from CHESED to YESOD inclusive. Below Ruach is its vehicle. Nephesh (NPSH 430) assigned to Malkuth, and representing the animal soul, or life of the body. This is fourfold, for it is mineral, vegetable, animal and also rudimentarily human, inasmuch as the cells of human bodies, although they are on the animal plane of consciousness, are, nevertheless, living beings of a different genus from those of other animals on this earth. This Nephesh, as its letters show is dominated by the Rajas quality, for its first letter is that of Scorpio, ruled by Mars; its second letter is the letter of Mars; and its third letter is the Mother-letter of Fire. Yet because this last letter is the Holy Letter, inasmuch as Sh = 300 = RVCh ALHIM, Ruach Elohim, the Life-Breath of the gods, the Secret Wisdom plainly shows that even this outermost and 'lowest' aspect of the Life-Power has within its apparent degradation the potencies of redemption.

Above Ruach is NShMH (=395), Neshamah, a word whose primary meaning is 'to blow out, as a candle; to destroy'. Yet this is also called the Intuition. Here we have the same thought that the Buddhists express, when they

speak of the extinction of personal consciousness as the Way Out of this forest of delusion. Jesus also said, 'For whosoever will save his life he shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake (literally, 'on account of me, or because of accepting my teaching') shall find it'. As you will find when you study the Tarot in connection with the Hebrew letters, the esoteric meaning of NShMH is: 'Through the death of the false personal consciousness (N) comes the new birth and regeneration which manifests as the true consciousness of immortality (Sh) resulting from the absolute surrender of personal life to the inner guidance of LIFE Itself, so that the personal consciousness is, 'I do nothing' (M), yet resulting also in a clear vision of reality which makes him who possesses it perceive that the Lord of the Universe is enthroned in the heart of every man (H)'. Can you grasp this paradox? Then you know why the Intuition, assigned to BINAH on the Tree of Life is that which 'blows out' or 'destroys' personal consciousness, and yet confers the gift of conscious immortality, and the ineffable bliss of 'sitting at the right hand of the Father', to employ an Oriental image, full of the most wonderful meanings for those who have ears to hear

Above the Intuition is ChIH (=23), Chaiah, the Life Force. As used in the Bible it signifies the power which quickens, revives, restores. Note the implication of these connotations. Consider, too, the letter-sequence: Ch the FENCE, Yod the HAND, HEH the WINDOW. This indicates that esoterically the Life-Force, whose seat is in CHOKMAH, is to be regarded as a protecting power (Ch), as that which confers skill and effectiveness to the work of human hands (Yod), and as the source of true vision (Heh).

Yet even Chaiah is not the highest. Seated in KETHER is IChIDH, Jechidah (=37), which is the equivalent of what the Hindus call Atma. It is the real SELF, identical with the Primal Will. Not a reflection, not a spark - IDENTICAL. This it was to which Jesus referred when he said, 'I and the Father are One'. That Cosmic Self, present everywhere, is the Self seated in your heart and mine. And the Qabalistic name for it (pronounced Yawkheedah, with accent on the second syllable) means 'sole; solitary' but at the same time it carries with it the idea of union and connection. For the SELF although it is One and Alone, is also the link of connection between all its manifestations. Compare it with the other words in the Qabalistic dictionary under the number 37.

To reunite human consciousness with this ONE is the real purpose of practical Qabalah. The work begins by impressing upon the intellectual, self-consciousness phase of the personal mind the true pattern of the cosmic relations. Such a pattern is the Tree of Life. Learn it thoroughly, so that you can reproduce all the diagrams in this lesson without error. Thus you will impress upon your subconsciousness a map, as it were, of the Way to Freedom. Then, by the subconscious processes of association and deduction, this pattern will begin to be built into your very flesh and blood. What is now only a partial intellectual grasp will become a living perception permeating every cell of your body.

In the next Section of this Course you will learn to apply your knowledge of numbers, colors, sounds, letters and the Qabalah to the analysis of the secret meaning of a book of symbols disguised by a certain school of adepts as a pack of cards. These are the Tarot cards, a book of pictorial symbols, concerning which Eliphas Levi said:

‘A prisoner devoid of books, had he only a Tarot of which he knew how to make use, could, in a few years, acquire a universal science, and converse with an unequalled doctrine and inexhaustible eloquence’.

To guide you in your first steps toward this goal is the purpose of Section B.

