

The Secret Force

Webster's dictionary defines magic as "the art, or body of arts, which pretends or is believed to produce effects by the assistance of supernatural beings or departed spirits, or by a mastery of secret forces in nature." This definition reflects common opinion accurately enough, but we must modify it a little before it will serve to define what is meant by magic in the B.O.T.A. The modification is slight but important. As we understand it, magic is the art which produces effects by mastery of secret forces in nature.

The exact derivation of the noun "magic" is in doubt. It is commonly thought to be of Persian origin, and to have come from the name of the "Magi" & priestly caste of the Zoroastrian religion. Certainly the word comes from Asia and probably it has a close affinity with the Sanskrit terms *Mahat*, great, and *Maya*. Max Mueller, at least, identifies *Maya* with magic, for he translates a passage from the Hindu sacred texts as follows: "Purusha (the SELF) is the Mayin (Magician) and Prakriti (Matter, or Nature) is Maya (Magic)."

Ordinarily *Maya* means illusion, but Shankara, in expounding the Vedanta, uses this term in several technical senses. Considered as the principle of self-determination, for example, as the power by which the Absolute concentrates itself at a particular point within its own subsistence, the word is used to denote the absolute potentiality of the whole cosmic self-expression that is to be, but is not yet. In this sense *Maya* is neither a thing nor a being nor a quality. It is nothing that is real, and yet it is not unreal. It is absolutely indescribable. Yet it is completely under the control of the Absolute Subsistence, and this Absolute Subsistence is absolutely free with reference to it.

In other words, this particular sense of the Sanskrit term *Maya* corresponds exactly to the Hebrew conception denoted by the Qabalistic use of the word *אין*, No-Thing. It is for this reason that *אין* is called the first veil of the Absolute.

I may seem to be taking you up to a point where the atmosphere is very thin indeed. Yet I must, if you are to understand what we mean by magic. The whole practice of the art depends upon a knowledge of the force we are using, and that force is precisely the “power of becoming” which the Qabalists call the first veil of the Absolute, echoing their Hindu brothers who call Maya “the veil of illusion which hides the Real.” The practice of magic is the art of determining the forms and shapes which shall be taken in the outer world by this veil of Reality, and the ability of human beings to practice this art is derived from the fact that the undifferentiated power which Qabalists call $\gamma\aleph$ is eternally present in every human life. Not only this, but the Absolute Subsistence of which $\gamma\aleph$ is the veil is eternally present, too. In a word, the power which completely controls Maya or $\gamma\aleph$ is NOW, at this very moment, a present reality in your life, and it is now, and always, free to exercise its unlimited creative, preservative and transforming command of the veil of illusion thorough which it makes itself manifest.

Thus the force named $\gamma\aleph$ is the secret force by the mastery of which magical effects are produced. I despair of finding words to make you understand, until the Life-Power Itself has ripened you to understanding, that when I say “are produced,” I use the present tense deliberately and with a careful regard for exact expression. I do not say, “By means of which magicians have produced their wonderful results.” I do not write, “By means of which you will, when you learn how, be able to produce magical effects.’ I say that $\gamma\aleph$ which is at this moment a part of your make-up as a human being, IS the secret force by the mastery of which magical effects ARE produced. As I write the words on the typewriter I find myself banging the keys, as if by that means to impress upon the stencil from which these words will be reproduced something of the clear vision of this truth that comes to me as I write. “May the words be as enlightening as the experience they express,” would be my prayer, only I know that no word can convey the meaning of that experience. If you have KNOWN that the $\gamma\aleph$ is within you, if you do know it now, you need no words. And the most the words can do is to raise the temperature of your mind from the heat of self-consciousness to the white heat of Superconsciousness. If that happens, you will know what I am only trying to say.

One of the purposes of the B.O.T.A. curriculum is to make our affiliates familiar with the teachings of our predecessors on the Way of Return, to set before those who work with us some of the brightest gems out of the treasury of wisdom which has come down from the past. Here is one, from Jacob Boehme's MYSTERIUM PANSOPHICUM, (published in Six Theosophic Points and other Writings, by Jacob Boehme, Alfred Knopf, New York):

The First Text

‘The unground is an eternal nothing, but makes an eternal beginning as a craving. For the nothing is a craving after something. But as there is nothing that can give anything, accordingly the craving itself is the giving of it, which yet also is a nothing, or merely a desirous seeking. And that is the eternal origin of Magic, which makes within itself where there is nothing; which makes something out of nothing, and that in itself only, though this craving is also a nothing, that is, merely a will. It has nothing, and there is nothing that can give it anything; neither has it any place where it can find or repose itself.”

The eternal nothing which makes an eternal beginning is making the eternal beginning in you even now. Never is there a time, whether you wake or sleep, that the ʼſ which makes something out of nothing is not a work within you. Its work, indeed, is what you call your life.

Notice that Boehme speaks of the eternal beginning as a craving. Out of this craving is projected the boundless Chaos concerning which another adept, Thomas Vaughn says:

“I am come now to the gross work or mechanics of the Spirit, namely, the separation of several substances from the same mass: but in the first place I shall examine that Limbus or huddle of matter wherein all things were so strangely contained. It is the opinion of some men, and those learned, that this sluggish empty rudiment of the creature was no created thing. I must confess the point is obscure as the thing itself, and to state it with sobriety, except a man were illuminated with the same Light that this Chaos was at first, is altogether impossible. For how can we judge of a nature different from our own, whose species also was so remote from anything now existent that it is impossible for fancy to apprehend, much more for reason to define it. If it be created, I conceive it the effect of the Divine Imagination, acting beyond itself in contemplation of the which was to come, and producing this passive darkness for a subject to work upon in the circumference.”

Compare the last sentence of this quotation with what is said near the beginning of this lesson concerning Maya. The same thought has been revived within very recent times in the excellent writings of the late judge Troward, who teaches that the beginning of the creative process is the self-contemplation of Spirit.

That self-contemplation includes the idea of the primal activity or Life-Breath which is the One Force of which all others are transformations. And this creative principle is precisely what is represented by the Aleph in the word יָא. In the Tarot it is the FOOL, descending into the abyss of existence by the path of Involution.

Knowing itself perfectly, the Life-Power must also contemplate, or look forward to, its evolution. And in the word יָא this second aspect of the Divine Imagination is represented by the letter YOD, the HAND. Since the hand is a human member, it is the special sign of MAN among the Hebrew letters, controlling all the others. By the Hand the House (ב) is built, by the Hand the Camel (א) is driven, by the HAND the Doors (ד) are opened. And MAN of whom the Hand is the symbol is the Life-Power's conception of Itself as evolved from lower forms of manifestation to the stage of self-recognition. Hence in the Tarot the card which represents YOD is a picture of HIM WHO STANDS ALONE, the Ancient of Days Who is the Eternal Light-Bearer for all the evolving begins on the Way of Return.

Finally, the self-contemplation of the Spirit must include its perception of itself as a transforming power. Changeless in itself, it must nevertheless be the principle at work in every change. And this is definitely and unmistakably indicated for us by the Qabalistic meaning of the third letter of נ"ך. For besides meaning 'to sprout, to grow,' the letter Nun has assigned to it the Qabalistic notion expressed by the word MOTION, which we must understand (on account of the fact that this word comes to use even in English translations from sources several centuries old) as having the now obsolete meaning of "impelling cause, reason, motive." Furthermore, we must not forget to take the hint offered by the attribution of the Path of Imaginative Intelligence to Nun. Again, MOTION in Hebrew is הלוך = 61, and 61 is the numeration of נ"ך. Here it is as if the final letter of נ"ך summed up the whole word, just as the idea of the Divine Imagination (which is the transforming power that works in the "separation of several (particular) substances," as Vaughan says) sums up the whole creative preservative and transformative self-expression of the Life-Power.

What all this metaphysical and Qabalistic discussion of נ"ך has to do with Magic is simply this: נ"ך is the first of the three veils by which Qabalists designate the secret force which is employed in the Magic of Light.

Its number, 61, may be translated as 'WILL-to-BEAUTY,' because in number symbolism we interpret the figure in the units place as being the origin of whatever process is symbolized by a number, and the figure in the tens place (if the number be one of two digits) as representing the result, or object aimed at. Thus we see that according to this interpretation of the nature of the secret force used in magic, all our practical work in the art must take into account the fundamental fact that the power we are seeking to direct is one whose intrinsic nature is a will, a craving, an urge toward the production of beautiful results. Consequently on the principle that to make Nature obey us we must first obey her laws, it becomes evident that any magical operation which we attempt is foredoomed to failure unless its motive or central purpose be the manifestation of some beautiful result. And to the degree that all the elements in this operation are expressions of the same urge, will each stage of the process be effective.

It matters a great deal, too, that the name of the secret force we use in magic is NO-THING. Due meditation upon this will reveal to you deeper meanings than those I shall set down here. But even here, through my veil

of words you may perhaps perceive something of the wonder of the thought. Primarily it signifies that in the practice of the art of magic we cannot in the least be prevented from success by any lack of things. To read some books about magic, one might suppose that before one could begin the practice of the art he must first surround himself by innumerable rare and costly objects. Take, for instance, this passage from the seventh chapter of Eliphas Levi's *Ritual of Transcendental Magic*:

'The magus who intends undertaking the works of light must operate on a Sunday, from midnight to eight in the morning, or from three in the afternoon to ten in the evening. He should wear a purple vestment, with tiara and bracelets of gold. The altar of perfumes and the tripod of sacred fire must be encircled by wreaths of laurel, heliotrope, and sunflowers; the perfumes are cinnamon, strong incense, saffron, and red sandal; the ring must be of gold, with a chrysolith or ruby; the carpet must be of lion skins, the fans of sparrow-hawk feathers.'

And then he continues with equally formidable lists of expensive things which are required for the operations dedicated to the several days of the week. All this is an elaborate blind, characteristic of Levi's ironical genius. If you had to get all these things before you could practice magic, I certainly should not be trying to tell you anything about the art, because I never had a carpet of lion skins in my life, and I couldn't tell you what a sparrow-hawk's feathers look like. Yet I have practiced what Levi calls "works of light," more than once.

It is true that for the more elaborate forms of magical ceremonial certain accessories are used—but none of them is indispensable, and the true magician does not depend upon any of these appurtenances for his results. The more he practices magic in the right way, the nearer does he approach that freedom from material limitations which would make it possible to carry out Eliphas Levi's instructions literally; and it is certainly true that a real magician will surround himself with the most beautiful objects that he can procure. At the same time, he never makes the mistake of supposing that these objects have any intrinsic magic power of their own. If you understand the laws of the art, you can practice it in an empty room, and get results.

For magic includes all the procedures made familiar in these days by Christian Science, Now Thought and Applied Psychology. Whatever the theories of the various schools, and whatever the particular variations of their practice, all these mental methods for healing disease or overcoming the limitations of circumstances are really the practice of magic.

One principle is always at work in these practices. No matter how the different practitioners may think they accomplish their results, the fact is that all of them do the same thing. Whether he knows it or not, every successful giver of “treatments,” whether for health or for prosperity, has learned how to form clear, sharp mental images of the effect he desires to produce. These images or thought-forms are the patterns through which the secret force works, and that is why the last letter of the Hebrew word which names this force is N, which Qabalists associate with Imaginative Intelligence and with Change, Growth and Development.

If you will refer to your Qabalistic Dictionary, under the number 61 you will find these words: ADVN, Lord; ALIK, to thee; ANI, the personal pronoun “I”; HVN, wealth. The secret force is thus shown to be the power which every religion personifies as the LORD. It is, by implication, revealed also as a power which enters into human life, which is not afar off, but near by, for ALIK, “to thee,” hints at what Jesus expressed more openly when he said: “The kingdom is within you.” It is, furthermore, the secret power which you name “I”, and which you try vainly to grasp with the self-conscious intellect. This is that of which we are told in the Upanishads: “If thou objectest ‘how should I grasp this?’ Pray, do not grasp it; for the residuum after all grasping is an end, is none other than thy real Self.” (Yet remember that neither ANI nor AIN is that Self, although ANI is the equivalent of the pronoun “I”. For whatever has name is not THAT, and “pronoun” means “name used in place of a noun”. ANI or “I” is the veil of THAT, is the word that indicates the identity between the No-Thing and what produces in your personal consciousness the feeling of “I”. But this, which makes you aware of the Self, is only the veil or power of that Self.) Finally, the secret force, as HVN, is the true wealth, of which external riches are but the materialization or demonstration. And in what does that wealth consist? In VISION, for H is the letter of Sight. In INTUITION and the power of

correlation, because V indicates both these ideas. And in IMAGINATION, the basic creative power by which the Self projects from the depths of its eternal Subsistence the Chaos out of which it forms a cosmos.

Let us revert to the number 61, which represents all these words. We have seen that as 1 working through 6 it symbolized with WILL to BEAUTY with which we must harmonize our magical operations, if we wish them to be successful. The consideration of this fact leads to further light concerning the means employed by magicians. All magical operations, whether they consist in the recitation of words and phrases; the use of perfumes or incense; the tracing of combinations of lines and letters in the air, on paper, parchment or metals; the employment of sounds and colors, or whatever else may enter into a ceremonial, are effective to the extent that they formulate the operator's realization of the nature of the force he uses, establish his consciousness that this force is fully able to accomplish the result aimed at, and make clear and vivid the mental image of that result as an accomplished fact.

A well constructed magical ceremonial is therefore an exercise in auto-suggestion. It utilizes all the senses to build a thought-form. It calls into play every kind of mental imagery. Thus its efficacy depends a great deal upon the operator's understanding of what he says and does. Effects are certainly produced when we simply go through the motions of a ceremonial, even if we do not understand it. We all possess a vast fund of subconscious knowledge which includes perception of what many symbols mean. The vibratory effects of sound and rhythmic gesture, moreover, are set up, no matter whether a person knows or does not know the meaning of what he says. Teach a child the correct pronunciation of a magical formula, and with suitable apparatus it is possible to register the vibrations of the words. The result will be just what would happen if an adept spoke them, so far as the lower modes of vibration are concerned. Right here is where the danger of dabbling in magic comes in. If we use a symbol, gesture, or other magical "tool" which we do not understand, we may easily set up activities out of harmony with the result we aim to produce. Hence the repeated injunctions of the wise as to the importance of being well grounded in theory.

A common objection to magical ceremonials is that they are too complicated. "Why go to all this trouble when you can get the same results simply by visualizing, or 'speak the Word'?" is a question I hear often. This is plausible and it appeals to the instinctive dislike of hard work which besets us all. As a matter of fact, the same results are NOT achieved by visualization or by "speaking the WORD." These methods work, to be sure, but their effectiveness is not so great as that of other methods.

Few people are good visualizers. The power to make visual images may be developed to some extent, but if you are a person whose imagery is chiefly auditory, you will never be able to make the vivid mental pictures that so many New Thought teachers believe to be indispensable. The limitations of speech are to be taken into consideration also. To express comparatively simple ideas often requires a long series of phrases, which are by no means sharp and definite. This is why we find illustrations in the dictionary. As the Chinese proverb has it: "One picture is better than 10,000 words."

When a magician traces a circle in the air, or makes some other symbolic gesture, by one brief action he formulates a suggestion which would take three times as long to put into words. When, at the same time, he uses color, sound, perfume and significant words, he makes a mental pattern which is like a painting in full color, whereas the simple visualization or spoken word is like a pencil sketch.

While I am on this subject, perhaps it may be well to add something concerning those great works of magic, the healing miracles of Jesus. For it is often from healing cults which rest their practice upon Jesus' teachings, that we hear these objections to ceremonial. The fact is that Jesus himself used "magic words," which are recorded in the Greek of the New Testament. These words have been studied by T.S. Lea and F.B. Bond, two orthodox English clergymen, and they have discovered that these are words of power like those used by Egyptian and Chaldean magicians. The power of these words consists in their vibratory values and in their numeration. The numeration, by the passage of number into geometry, is a clue to the formation of patterns or figures which are fundamental in the cosmic expression of beauty, and which are fundamental therefore in that particular manifestation of this cosmic expression which we call human art.

The remarkable discoveries of these two clergymen are to be found in their books, "A Preliminary Investigation of the Qabala contained in the Coptic Gnostic Books and of a Similar Gematria in the Greek Text of the New Testament," and "The Apostolic Gnosis." These works afford confirmation, from a source which cannot be suspected of partisanship to occultism, of the teaching which has often been mentioned in these pages. They show that in sacred texts language, number and geometry are always mingled, for some practical purpose. They show, too, that the Gematria of the New Testament works itself out geometrically in the Pentagon, the Hexagram, the Triangle, the Cross and the Cube. Each of these symbols is used in magic, and their magical use and efficacy depends upon the fact that from the circle, the line, the triangle, the square, the pentagon, the hexagon and such figures, as combined in the five Platonic solids, are derived the fundamental principles of proportion which find expression in all beautiful forms, whether those forms be those produced by Nature or by Man. Ceremonial magic is a ritualistic, artistic, conscious use of these basic patterns of the cosmos, aimed at the production of beautiful results. This, whether the magician realizes the full import of what he is doing or not.

Let us take a simple instance for illustration of this point. Suppose you send five dollars to a practitioner for a prosperity treatment, and that your only immediate motive in so doing is a desire for more money. There doesn't seem to be any particular urge to beauty in this, but there is undoubtedly a wish on your part to get a better adjustment of the circumstances which make up your environment. That urge is the cosmic insistence upon symmetry and proportion, pressing out into manifestation as your desire for what you hope will make your personal world more orderly—less of a chaos. The better you know what you want for money for, the more certain is it that you will formulate a pattern of some specific beautiful result.

Magical ceremonial, then, formulates this urge to the expression in the outer world of the Order and Beauty which the Spirit is in Itself. It works to this end by using precisely the numbers and geometrical figures which the Life-Power itself employs in its cosmic self-expression. The numbers and lines of snow-flakes, the points and angles of crystallization, the curves and ellipses of planetary orbits, the lines of symmetry in plant and animal life - these are the things impressed upon the subconscious mind of the magician as he performs his ritual.

These are the numbers, the points, the lines, the patterns that you are expressing in your everyday life. They determine the formation of your body, they regulate its every movement. You cannot walk across a room, nay, you cannot even digest a meal without the working of the Life-Power through these geometrical expressions of numbers. Thus there is a sense in which your whole life is a magical ritual. Like the man in Moliere's play who was amazed to find that he had been talking prose all his life, you have been practicing magic all your days.

It is well to know this, for then you will find it easy to banish all the fears which may have been implanted in your mind by the silly way that some who delight to call themselves occultists (usually with the accent in the wrong place!) write and talk about magic.

What you will learn in the B.O.T.A. concerning magic will not give you any new power. The purpose of all these lessons is to make you realize that living is magical, that the art of living and the art of true magic are one and the same thing. By making it as clear as we can that the principal symbols of formal magical rituals are based upon forms which can be seen or traced in all modes of the cosmic life-expression, we aim to enable you the better to understand how the magic of the Life-Power finds expression in your thought, speech and action.

Our purpose, then, is not so much to teach formulas and rituals, as to awaken our affiliates to a realization of the truly magical processes of life, so that they may take conscious part in those processes. When the members of the B.O.T.A. begin consciously to realize what the Life-Power is doing through them, they will begin to be practical magicians. For whenever a man finds out how some process in nature operates, it is bound to happen, sooner or later, that this knowledge stimulates his invention, so that he makes novel applications of the laws which he has formulated.

A word or two now about the difference between White Magic and Black Magic: The distinction is in two points only. The first has to do with the magician's idea of what he is doing. The second is concerned with his use of his power. Whatever makes us believe that we are using forces outside of ourselves, whatever makes us think that we depend upon anything but the exhaustless Life-Power of which we are all centers, is black, no matter how

altruistic its intention. The use of magic for selfish ends, for gaining ascendancy over the lives of others, for promoting our own good at the expense of anybody else, is also black.

I have known many well-meaning people who have been led astray by the first of these errors. They supposed that when they called upon the names of angels, they summoned celestial beings to do their bidding. Or perhaps they used ceremonials in which evil spirits were bound to carry out their behests. There is more of this sort of thing going on today than most people have any idea of, and its results are invariably destructive. The danger lies in the fact that the longer one practices this sort of magic the more does the auto-suggestion sink in that the operator is not able to do his works by the power of the Life within him, but must depend upon the assistance of other beings. Thus his practice intensifies his sense of separateness instead of overcoming it.

Trying to influence people by occult means “for their own good” is a subtle form of evil magic. It flourishes in these days among people who have found out that thought and feeling can be transferred telepathically, but its ultimate results are always disastrous. The error lies in the supposition that any of us is qualified to judge his brother or sister.

It is hardly necessary to enter into details into selfish uses of magic power. But it seems necessary to say that the use of this power to help ourselves, to improve our circumstances, to extend the circle of our influence is not always black. It is by no means selfish to use magic to make ourselves free from disease, to increase our consciousness of supply so that we shall not fall in debt, or in other ways to increase our ability to be of service to others. More than one sincere and earnest student of the occult has died because he would not use magic for self-healing. These mistaken persons do not see that it is really more selfish to refuse to use every available means to prolong the period of their services to humanity.

The principal danger, however, is the tendency to fall into the error of thinking that a ceremonial itself accomplishes the result. We may avert this danger by reminding ourselves again and again that every operation is effective because it concentrates and directs the One Power whose veil is 𐌒𐌕, the No-Thing.

The Qabalistic technical term which denotes the particular aspect of this No-Thing utilized in magic is AVD, Od or Aud. (From this, perhaps, Reichenbach derived his term, Odic Force.)

Examine this word Qabalistically. The first letter is the sign of the Life-Breath. The second is the conjunction “and.” The third is the sign of the Venus ray, expressing itself in human consciousness as love and as artistic adaptation of external conditions by action rooted in creative imagination.

From another point of view the first letter stands for the balance of Will and Wisdom, because it is the letter assigned to the 11th Path of the Tree of Life. From the same point of view the second letter, corresponding to the 16th Path, represents the balance between Wisdom and Mercy, while the final letter is that of the path which joins Wisdom and Understanding. Our use of magic, then, must be an expression of the Will-to-Good, must utilize the Wisdom which finds expression in the sphere of the highways of the stars, and must link up that Wisdom with a perception of the working of the self-imparting, beneficent quality of the Life-Power. Finally, it must express our perception of cosmic principled (Wisdom) in some specific way. It must look forward to a definite result. It must include an understanding of the outcome of the principles perceived by Wisdom.

In your Qabalistic dictionary you will find (under the number 11) that AVD corresponds to the following words: AI, where?, BBVA, when?; DHB, (aramaic) gold; and ChG, circularity of form or motion.

AI, where? suggests the inquiry, “Where shall we look for the magic force?” The answer has been given again and again. Even the letters of the word are a clue to it. For A is the symbol of the cosmic Life-Breath, and I is not only the symbol of the constructive and formative powers of Man, but it also represents the Intelligence of Will, or the realization of the true nature of Will. Look to the one Life-Breath, expressed as Will, for your magic power. In other words, look within. “Where shall we find the magic force?” Nowhere else but HERE, right where we are at this very point in space.

BBVA, when? indicates the other question, one that I am asked, in one form or another almost every day. “When shall I find this power?” To this question the answer is, “You have found it now. At this very moment you are making use of it. Awaken to its wonderful possibilities, and there is

nothing you cannot achieve.” Not in some distant future, but at this moment as you read these lines, you are using the force employed in the magic of light. True, you may be like the farmer’s children in Russell Conwell’s story - the children in South Africa who were playing with diamonds, but thought they were just ordinary stones. We hope in this course of lessons to change all that.

DChB is an interesting word because it conceals an alchemical secret. The first letter is attributed to Venus, the second to a sign ruled by the Moon, and the third to Mercury. Venus, Luna and Mercury are the alchemical terms for Copper, Silver and Quicksilver. Observe that the first two are the metals which are the best conductors of electricity. And the whole word means gold. Thus it is like HVN, which corresponds to 𐤅𐤍, in that it is a symbol of wealth. It is interesting also because on the Tree of Life it corresponds to Paths which balance those corresponding to the letters AVD. The path of B balances the path of A, and the path of Ch balances the path of V, while the path of D is common to both words. Thus, if you were to diagram these two words by placing them in their proper paths on the Tree, the result would be as follows on the next page:

Finally, ChG, representing circularity of form or motion indicates a most important fact about the magic force. It moves in cycles, it comes back to its starting-point, its wheels, so to say. And for this reason every magical ritual is performed within a circle.

Of this I shall speak at some length in the next lesson, which will be devoted to a consideration of the meaning of the Magic Circle.

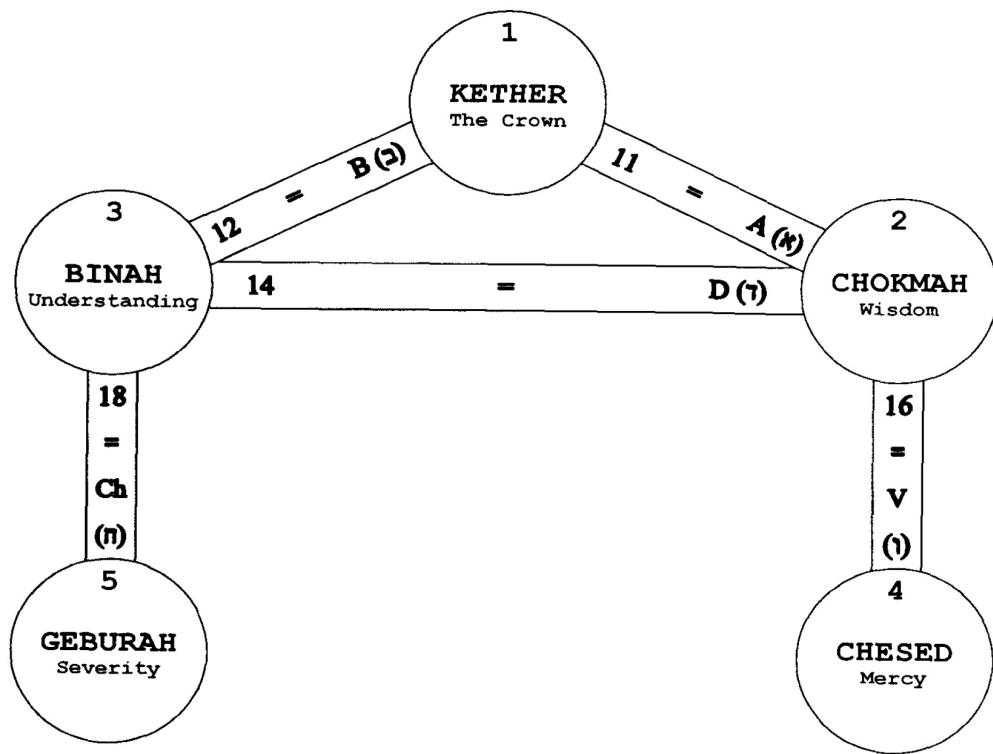


FIGURE 1A