

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life is the main glyph of the Qabalists. It is a compendium of the sciences and the mysteries. It has been called the "Rosetta Stone of the mysteries". The **Rosetta Stone** was engraved with Egyptian hieroglyphics (then indecipherable) plus two known languages, demotic (the common language of Egypt) and Greek (the language of the Egyptian rulers at that time). The translation of hieroglyphics into two known languages led to the deciphering of the language of hieroglyphics. Like the Rosetta Stone, the Tree of Life allows us to compare all the various mystery teachings and interrelate them meaningfully.



The **Tree of Life** is not only useful for understanding mystery teachings. In its symbolic structure and relationship of its parts, it illustrates all possible combinations of the nature of the universe. All philosophy, religion, science and every other matter conceivable has its place upon the tree. Learning the significance of the Tree of Life provides the mind of the student with a sorting system for organising all knowledge and experience and reveals the relation of each part to the others. It is the most effective system for meaningfully sorting all possible data that I have encountered.

The Tree of Life consists of ten spheres (sephiroth) connected by twenty-two pathways. Its structure is based upon the "seed of life" and the "flower of life" figures. There are three vertical pillars. As you look at the tree, to the right is the pillar of mercy. To the left is the pillar of severity. The central one is the pillar of mildness or equilibrium.

The Tree as depicted in diagrams is the objective tree, which represents the

universe or macrocosm. However, when working subjectively with the tree, one "backs into" it. When the Tree of Life represents the individual microcosm, the tree is reversed. Then Binah is to the right of the head.

Before a more detailed inspection of each sphere of the Tree of Life, let's take a swift journey from the top to the bottom. This is in good accordance with mystery school practice. The Tree reveals itself through associations between its various parts. Spending too much time in one spot prevents the gathering of impressions and perspectives so necessary to a working understanding.

Although the whole tree of life comes into existence at once, each numbered sphere follows the former and precedes the next in a logical sequence. Since human experience occurs within time, this logical sequence will be described as a temporal sequence, i.e. sphere one is created first. Then out of the "overflow" of number one, number two comes into existence, etc.

Before anything exists, the universe is in a state of slumber. All is like a sea of negative light, infinitely deep and wide with no surface. Then mysteriously, the Source awakens and decides where something will happen. The negative light swirls in upon itself toward that first stage. Nothing yet exists, but movement within darkness toward a centre creates the first sephirah (the plural is sephiroth; sphere) Kether, the Crown, also known as "the beginning of the whirlings.

In Kether, Source awakens, but does not yet know itself. There is no other from which to view itself. Then it emanates the first other, Chokmah - Wisdom. This is the Divine Father principle of life itself. Chokmah radiates joyfully outward in all directions. Chokmah then overflows to form Binah, Understanding, the Divine Mother principle



of form. Binah pulls the freedom of Chokmah's light into limitation. Binah is the sphere of Saturn, the principle of manifestation. Chokmah is like gasoline burning on the ground, radiating energy but performing no useful work. Binah is like a motor – heavy and inert – but capable of putting the fiery energy of Chokmah to work.

These three form **the supernal triad**.

Next comes Chesed, Mercy. This is the sphere of Jupiter, the "great benefic" of astrology. Jupiter is like a rich uncle who helps finance your dreams to come true. Jupiter assists, expands, grows, and increases all.

But unlimited expansion would deplete so next comes Geburah, Severity, the sphere of Mars. Chesed lets everything grow. Geburah prunes and cuts away unwanted parts to make room for the chosen fruit to grow. These two, Mercy and Severity, balance each other's activity. They can be likened to the up and down motions of pistons in an engine.



Completing a circle defined by the first five sephiroth, next comes Tiphareth, Beauty. Tiphareth is the sphere of the Sun and the son. Tiphareth stands in the centre of the Tree of Life between Source above and the physical world in Malkuth below. Tiphareth is the image-making power. In Tiphareth are the perfect images of what can be in the worlds below. To Tiphareth are ascribed all heroes and saviours – those with one parent in Heaven and one on earth. These three, Chesed, Geburah and Tiphareth form **the triad of the higher mind**.

Next comes Netzach, Victory. Netzach is the sphere of Venus. This is the realm of desire. Desires are a promise from above. They are images of what can be. Balancing Netzach across the tree is Hod, Splendour, the sphere of Mercury. Venus represents your feelings. Hod is your thoughts. These two make also make a balancing pair. Before you act, you think about what you should do and compare this with what you feel you want to do.

Then comes Yesod, the Foundation, the sphere of the Moon. This is the shadowy world of the unconscious from whence dreams arise. We visit this world when we sleep and dream. It contains the collected thought-forms of humanity. As you can imagine, this is pretty much of a mess. It's the astral plane where images are transformed into blueprints before taking on form. These three: Netzach, Hod and Yesod form **the triad of the personality**.



Finally, the last emanation on the Tree of Life is Malkuth, the Kingdom. This is our **physical world** in both its substantial and subtle aspects.

As you see, the Qabalists believe that the physical world is generated by the descent of light and life from previous worlds, metaphorically above. Note that the worlds do not extend actually above one another like stories of a building. Although they come sequentially into existence, they all exist in the same space just as your mind, emotions and body exist in the same space. Each may be considered to be on a different wavelength or in a different dimension but simultaneously present in the same place. Another analogy would be a television screen that shows different pictures when the channel is changed to a different broadcast wavelength. It's all here. It's just a matter of which world you are tuned into.

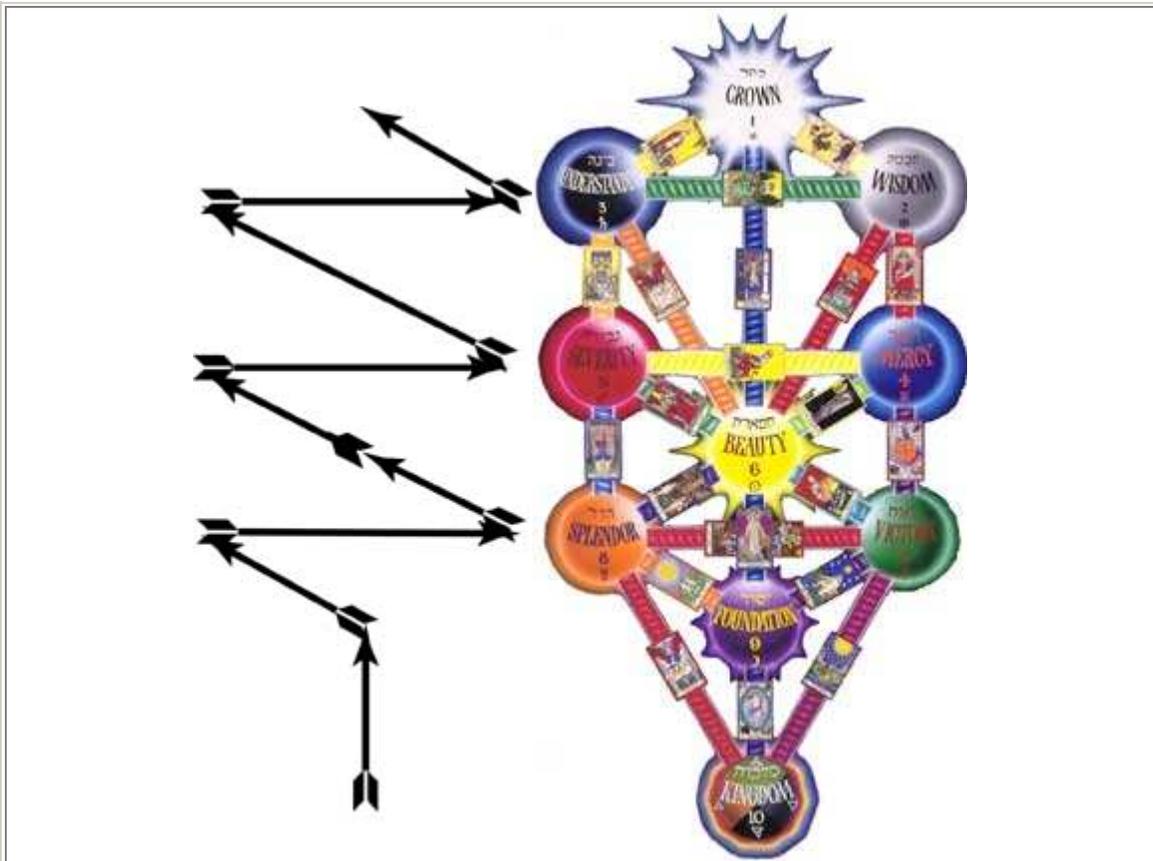
Creation or the involution of consciousness occurs from top to bottom, following the numeration of the sephiroth. Evolution from physical back to spiritual goes in precisely the opposite direction, from bottom to top of the tree. Thus the individual soul goes down the tree into the worlds of form and then evolves back up the tree, like a salmon returning to spawn in its place of birth.

Let's travel back up the tree together. Through many incarnations, the individual human soul gradually awakens from selfish concerns and longs for an end to the pain and suffering. Like the adult salmon, the human longs to go home to Source. But how does it do that? The Tree of Life provides an excellent road map for the journey.

There are two basic paths. One is straight up the middle pillar from Malkuth (body consciousness) through Yesod (subconscious-astral visions) through Tiphareth (pure feeling devoid of images) and through the longest path between any of the sephiroth back into the light of Kether. The central pillar is concerned with consciousness. This "**path of the arrow**" is the path chosen by the Eastern mysteries. The ascetic yogi seeks to retreat from this physical world and enter the light as fast and directly as possible. Such a swift path generally requires that the chela (Eastern student of spirituality) find a capable master, follow his instructions implicitly, move away from active life into seclusion, eat a vegetarian diet, and do little else beside his sadhana (spiritual path and practices).



As few Westerners are capable of fulfilling all these requirements, it is generally better for Western people to follow the path of the Western mysteries. In the West, it is our dharma (life path) to conquer the physical world and to bring Heaven to earth. The visions of truth, honesty, purity, beauty, altruism and the like that one receives on the path – all these the Westerner wishes to live here on earth. To do so, it is necessary to master the various powers of consciousness represented by the right and left pillars of the Tree of Life. The Western path is to travel back up the Tree of Life through each of the sephiroth in reverse order, following the path of the flaming sword. No phase can be skipped.



Having chosen the Western path, the aspirant (one who aspires to knowing and being the divine) begins in Malkuth, the physical world and body consciousness. Here we begin with the work of purification. Attention must be given to be sure that the body has the raw materials it needs. These are food (proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, enzymes, trace elements), water (pure and fresh), air and light. The body needs enough movement to sweat regularly and needs to be cleansed regularly. The powers of bathing, sitting before a fire and sunbathing are not to be underestimated. Slothful habits need to be overcome and replaced with habits that lead you to your chosen goal. Mastery of the physical conditions of life also includes arranging for adequate income through worthy activities of a positive nature.

Next, the aspirant needs to cleanse the subconscious. Yesod contains all the collective thought-forms of humanity. All the urges, fantasy images and strong emotions of all humanity – all the ways humanity has treated one another – all this is in Yesod. When you function consciously in Yesod, your awareness is on the level of astral psychism. Without the higher awareness of Tiphareth, this is a dangerous state. You can easily be swayed by the errors and rampant evil in the mass-mind. Your intuitions are prone to be biased by any unresolved problems in your personal nature. Reviewing personal history, recapitulation, honesty, attention to dreams and fantasies, practising "no distraction", meditation... these are among the activities required for cleansing the level of Yesod, the Foundation.

Then comes Hod, Splendour - the intellect. Right use of mind requires seeking reality, truth by actively looking beyond the superficial appearances. What do you think about? With what do you busy your mind? Will these thoughts lead you to your chosen goal? Discipline your mind to attend to thoughts that empower you.

Across from and balancing Hod is Netzach, Victory. Victory is the sephirah of the desire nature. What do you desire? What do you say out loud with power? The most powerful utterance of most people, that which they say with the most intense emotion is the word, "shit!" If that is what you utter with power, and you are a powerful creator, is it any wonder that your life stinks? Here there is much cleansing and clearing to do, much discipline to exert. Be vigilant to only think, say and do that which affirms your highest aspirations. Cultivate intense desires. They are the "rocket fuel" for the spiritual path. And choose that which you desire with great precision.

These first four form the personality and body. This is about as much as most people are aware of in their lives. Symbolically above this level is the gold of enlightenment, the sun, the Son, the redeemer – Tiphareth, Beauty. When the personality first perceives the Self in Tiphareth, it appears as the Holy Guardian Angel. From the level of personality, it looks like God, but it is your Higher Self – a deeper level of your own selfhood. For the first time, here in Tiphareth the aspirant experiences pure intuitive feeling awareness, free from the images of Yesod. When you become fully aware on this level, the Higher Self incarnates into the personality. Functioning consciously in this level, you are a "lesser adept".

Next in Geburah, Severity, you have the lessons of power to learn. Just being meek won't yield success. Power must be wielded. Limitations and blockages must be removed. Evil must be fought. The outdated must be eliminated. Another name for Geburah is Deen, Justice. Learning to wield power wisely in the service of the light is the lesson of Geburah. Mastery of this sphere bestows upon you the title of "greater adept".

In Chesed, Mercy, you learn to balance the martial destructive forces of Geburah with gentleness. However, the gentleness or mercy of Chesed is not weakness, but rather the nurturing and magnifying of that which is deemed worthy. When you have learned to function consciously on the level of Chesed, you are a "exempt adept", exempt from the necessity of further incarnation.

Beyond this triad of the higher mind is the great abyss. The personal consciousness cannot cross the abyss. Personal concerns have to be relinquished. Only love and desire to serve can prepare you for this definitive journey to the three "supernals".

In Binah, Understanding, you become identified with the mother of all life. Your friends and students are like plants in your garden. You feel their joys and pain, even when far distant from them. All of humanity and all of life are your children. Your great heart is a blessing to all. On this level, you are a "master of the temple".

In Chokmah, Wisdom, you experience the level of being the cosmic father principle.

Your radiance enlightens. You communicate with your students inwardly by telepathy. In your endeavours you administer cosmic law. This is the level of the "master of wisdom". Saint Germain functions from this level.

The initiate of Kether, the Crown, experiences the "one without a second". This is the level of unity consciousness. Here you are Ipissimus, "he who is most himself". Not much can be said intelligibly about this state of consciousness. Here one unites with the highest principle of deity.

Such is the journey before us, back home to Source.

Let's take a longer tour down the tree. Since each part makes sense only in relation to the others, it is best to not spend too much time considering one part, but to look at the various relations again and again from different angles. It is through "chewing" on the complex chains of associations that the mind is expanded and made able to grasp that which was formerly beyond its reach. Ready to begin again? Here we go!



Qabalists contend that there is no absolute beginning. What they call the beginning is just a convention. In order to make sense of the vastness of the universe, the Qabalists draw three veils behind the Tree of Life – behind the spectacle of manifestation. These do not represent an impenetrable barrier, but rather are more like the backdrop behind the stage. Against this curtain, one can more easily see the figures in the foreground.

These are called "**the three veils of the absolute**". Although they are beyond the understanding of the conscious mind, nevertheless the effort of reaching toward them opens the consciousness to an influx of energies that speed the personal unfoldment. The first veil is called Ain. Ain means "no, not, without". The second veil is Ain Soph meaning "without boundary, limitless". The third veil is Ain Soph Aur meaning "negative light or limitless light".

If we cogitate on these words, we at first find them to be without much logical sense. Still they point the mind in a very fertile direction. Although the mind cannot as yet go there, the attempt is well worth the effort. The unknown is not the unknowable.

So, before manifestation, that which is is not anything at all. Therefore it cannot be accurately compared with anything that is. It has no boundaries and in quality is most

similar to light. And yet to make it clear that is not light as we know it, it is defined as negative light. It is like an endless sea of negative light, without surface or dimensions. The Hindus call this state, "The night of Brahma". Their god of creation, Brahma, is slumbering. This is not only "before" manifestation, it is before the beginning of time itself. What is time? Einstein defined time as being what clocks measure. The basic mechanism of the clock is one thing moving relative to another. If there is no relative motion between separate objects, there is no time.

Although we cannot mentally know the unmanifest, it does take form as all we do know. In a symbolic sense, it is the mother of existence. Although you cannot mentally attain direct understanding of this level of (non-)existence, you can use the symbolism to point your mind toward it.

The human being is capable of functioning in realms higher than those of thought. Yet when it returns from these realms back into human mentation, those higher experiences cannot be fully grasped by the mind. They can be conveyed to others who have shared such experiences by means of symbols, the language of the subconscious mind. Even though the job of fully understanding with the conscious mind is impossible, one can learn to interact with these higher levels of consciousness meaningfully. Great treasures and grand inspirations that motivate us in our life works are to be found there.

The Qabalistic way of teaching is to give the student symbols, images and terse phrases that tickle the mind into reaching further than it ever has before. Thus Ain Soph Aur (and its first "condensation" - Kether) is defined as "a circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." Use this literally impossible image to assist your mind to stretch in new directions and dimensions.

The Qabalists conceive of each of the spheres of the Tree of Life as emanating from the preceding one and in due course, being the source that emanates the next. For a mental metaphor of the process, you might imagine a pool filling up with water and then overflowing to create the next pool. Or you might imagine dissolving as much sugar in hot water as you can. Then as the solution cools, the sugar crystallises out of solution. This is a beautiful and amazing process to observe. In a way, each sephirah crystallises out of the preceding one.

The first sephirah is Kether, the Crown. Kether is called "the beginning of the whirlings". Kether is the first emanation. It mysteriously emerges from the limitless negative light. We may imagine that in the process of creation, before anything occurs there must first be a decision as to where the stage will be – where creation will occur. That decision upon a centre and consequent whirling motion inward toward that centre is Kether. In the first act of creation, long before any "thing" exists, space is concentrated in upon itself. Kether is thinkable, but it is the highest thought of which the finite consciousness is capable of conceiving. It can be thought, but only by those who have stretched their consciousness to the maximum.

MacGregor Mathers was the head of the English mystery school, The Golden Dawn. Concerning the ideas in the last few paragraphs, he made a statement that is a gem for

expanding the consciousness of the student: "The limitless ocean of negative light does not proceed from a centre, for it is centreless, but it concentrates a centre which is the number one of the manifested Sephiroth, Kether, the Crown, the First Sephirah."

If we conceive of the Source as a living being – and we have every reason to believe that this is a correct conception – then Source in Kether is the great "I am". Every sephiroth of the tree has a god-name. The god-name of Kether is Eheieh meaning "I am" or more accurately, "I am becoming." At this stage of evolution, there is no "other". There is no other viewpoint from which the Source can observe itself, so there is no self-knowledge. Source just is. The Western mysteries as embodied in Qabalah contend that Kether is Yechidah, the indivisible one self that takes form as all seemingly separate beings.

Next, Source emanates a mirror image of itself "away" from itself. From its new vantage point, Source can see what Source is and thus obtains knowledge of its nature. This emanation of Kether is called Chokmah which means "wisdom". In Chokmah, Source becomes aware of its own nature and qualities. Observing its own nature for the first time, Source says, "Oh, that's what I am." Thus the "god-name" in Chokmah is Yod-Heh-Vau-Heh often transliterated as Yahway or Jehovah meaning "I am that I am."

In this stage or state of being, Source knowing its own nature generates wisdom. Chokmah is the source of Chaiah, the life force in all things. The Hebrew toast, l'chaim, meaning "life" is from the same root. The Qabalists consider Chokmah to be the sphere of the divine father. They state that the universe continues to exist because of his ceaseless meditation upon his own nature. We are "held in the mind of God".

Chokmah stands at the head of the pillar on the right side of the Tree of Life, the pillar of mercy. In Chokmah, Source knows who Source is and is joyfully radiating this knowledge in all directions. Chokmah is the begetter of all that is.

In the Qabalistic system, the names and their spelling in Hebrew are very important. Chanting these names has been used for centuries to quicken and awaken consciousness. One may choose a very specific aspect of the divine and energise this very aspect within the individual human. Hebrew does not have separate numbers. The letters of the alphabet are also used as numbers. Thus the first letter, Aleph, is also the number one. In the curious system of Gematria, the letters making up important mystery names are added together. In many cases, other words adding up to the same number have a similar or complementary meaning. Meditating upon the various words that add up to the same number is one means of eliciting enlightenment upon a particular aspect of human and divine nature.

Yechidah, the one self in Kether, adds up to 37. Chokmah, the reflection of Kether adds up to 73. Notice how the digits are reflected – 37, 73. To discover the nature of Chokmah, consider several other words that add up to 73: shining, rejoicing, he meditates, join, desire.



I have gathered these into a verse of a Qabalistic song, [Flashing Lights](#):

At the head of mercy, wisdom eye to eye
with glory.
Looking on the One, how he must shine.
Rejoicing, he meditates us. All life joined
by his desire.
Chaiah is thy Father, divine life.

After Source knows its own qualities and potential in Chokmah, next comes doing something about it. Chokmah radiated in all directions. In this "finite but limitless" universe, light travels in a straight line through the curved lens of space and eventually returns to its point of origin. The space defined by this complete circulation of light from Chokmah is the "womb of God", the night time sky, the universe, the sphere of Binah, Understanding, the divine Mother.

The "god-name" in Binah is Elohim. This word has been a source of much difficulty for the often very patriarchal Hebrew scholars. It consists of the root, Eloha, which is a feminine name like "Linda" plus the suffix, -im, which is a masculine plural ending in Hebrew. Thus the name of God in Binah is feminine with multiple masculine helpers attached. In the Bible, when God is creating Heaven and Earth, God's name is Elohim. "Vayomer Elohim Yehi Aur" - And the Elohim said, 'Let there be light'. For all the various names for Source, our Western Bible translations simply say "God". However, Eheieh is genderless, Jehovah is masculine, and Elohim is certainly feminine (with male helpers attached).

Standing at the head of the pillar of mercy, Binah is the principle of manifestation. Binah is like the Ain Soph Aur, the dark and mysterious source of all, on a lower level. By binding the light of Chokmah together in oscillating quantum bundles, manifestation is made possible. Qabalists contend that all this is Maya or illusion. Source is one. Manifest life is but a shadow play, a great game of "hide and go seek" created by Source for own its joyful entertainment.

Although in a cosmic sense, all this life around us is illusory, while we are incarnate here, we still need to learn and obey its rules or suffer the consequence. The Qabalistic way to deal with this life is to learn the laws of the higher levels of existence. Then one can use a higher law to change the conditions of a lower plane.

Prayer, as taught in the recently found Isaiah scroll, is an example of this application of higher laws. Isaiah teaches us to evoke that which is desired but not yet manifested by feeling that it is already here and being grateful that it is.

In *The Laws of Manifestation*, David Spangler states this principle well:

"What is manifestation?"

Manifestation is a process of working with natural principles and laws in order to translate energy from one level of reality to another.

Manifestation is a change of form or state of condition being; it is not the creation of something out of nothing. The dictionary defines it as 'making clear to sight or mind, making visible'. The implication here is that the thing manifested was already there but it was not clear, not visible. It was in a different state of being.

For manifestation to work, we must recognise that that which we wish to manifest does already exist, even if it is invisible or separate from our immediate environment. What we need to do, therefore, is to open a route or start a process through which it can enter our environment and be 'clear and visible' to us."

Binah is the sphere of Saturn, the principle of form. As the divine Mother principle, Binah is that which gives birth to all things. But all things that are born, die. This is not the working of another principle. It is just the other side of the amazing wholeness and mystery of Binah. From our personal point of view, she is wonderful and terrible. She is the nurturing hand, breast and heart of the mother. She is also death's scythe, cutting us down.

Qabalists say that like all mothers, when giving birth to each separate being, Binah experiences the pang of separation from her babies. In order to be with her babies and help them, she voluntarily leaves Heaven and goes into exile. She divides herself into as many parts as babies and puts a little candle flame of her spirit into each of our hearts. This divine flame, the Shekinah, is the radiance seen around the head of the enlightened (the halo) and shining around the Arc of the Covenant. It is in us all, giving us faith and gradually, through uncounted ages and incarnations, guiding us back home.



Of Binah I sing in the next verse of *Flashing Lights*:

So severe yet nourishing, the Mother of all born.
Holy One who twists light into form.
After confusing all of us,
with faith she comes to guide us back home.
Sing her name, Shekinah, divine soul.

These first three sephiroth, Kether, Chokmah and Binah form what the Qabalists call, "the supernals". Theirs are the non-colours white, grey and black. They represent the abstract or spiritual principles behind manifestation.

Emerging from the dark and mysterious, symbolically female unmanifest, we have the

first emanation, Kether, the Father. (Chokmah is also symbolised as the Father in opposition to Binah as the Mother.) Next we cross the great abyss. The next six sephiroth – Chesed, Geburah, Tiphareth, Hod, Netzach and Yesod – are referred to as the "lesser countenance", Adam Kadmon, the King. His Queen, his bride is Malkuth, the physical plane. Father, King and Bride form the Tree. This symbolism is fertile ground for meditation.

As we leave the supernals and cross the abyss from the spiritual arena, we enter into the level of the individuality. Individuality has a different meaning here than in common psychological use. Your individuality is your "lower God nature", that part of your being that appears to your personality in the form of the Holy Guardian Angel. In the triad of individuality, we encounter Chesed, Geburah and Tiphareth. Theirs are the primary colours: blue, red and yellow.

Chesed, Mercy, is the sphere of Jupiter. Chesed is represented by the crowned king sitting upon his throne. There is peace in the land and great abundance. Chesed is the principle of growth and expansion.

Chesed is directly below Chokmah and across from its balancing opposite, Geburah, Severity. Thus Chesed is Chokmah on a lower level. Like Chesed, Chokmah is a father-figure, generous and helpful. Chesed organises, preserves and builds up all the creations of Chokmah. In physiology, Chesed correlates with all anabolic processes – those that build the structure of the body. All these correlations relate directly to the planetary correspondence of Chesed with Jupiter.

Chesed is the level of archetypal ideas. When you are considering some abstract idea and formulating in your mind some novel activity to apply the idea, you are functioning upon the level of Chesed. One able to think upon this plane sees in the mind's eye the finished sculpture within the raw wood or stone. In Chesed are the potentials perceived.

One who only has access to Yesod accepts the astral images seen there as realities. He who does will be deluded by the illusions of the projection of the unresolved traumas and erroneous interpretations in his personal subconscious. And he will be jostled about, like flotsam on the sea, by the images, beliefs and motivations in the universal subconscious "mass-mind" of humanity. On this level, he will be influenced by the experiences of his genetic family line, his race, the images shared by humans at the time of his incarnation and the sum total of all experiences throughout the whole history of humanity.

He who has access to Chesed can generate images so to speak, from above, and can use such images to clothe his abstract ideas and thus be enabled to bring them into practical form. In Chesed, we receive the worthy inspirations that subsequently we bring down into the worlds of form.

The mystic who has attained to Tiphareth but not yet to Chesed will also be deluded after a more subtle manner. Unlike the Yesodic man, he will know that the images he sees in the waters of subconsciousness are symbolic and not real in and of themselves. However,

he will make the mistake of thinking they are sent by God instead of knowing that they are just the tokens of his stage upon the path. This common error is seen often in Christians who confuse the person of Jesus with the energy of the Christ. They then worship the son as the father. The unfortunate result is that they end up worshipping Jesus as a special and different creature than themselves. They then fail to see the most important message: that we are here to transmute ourselves and embody the Christ-consciousness within ourselves even as Jesus of Nazareth did.

If we use the metaphor of geometry, Kether is the point, Chokmah is the line, Binah is the plane and Chesed is the solid. The point has no dimensions. The line has one. The plane has two dimensions and the solid has three. So in Chesed, we have the first three-dimensional forms. The supernals are abstract and high above the plane upon which most of us consciously operate. In Chesed, we come to the first solid form. Manifestation emerges from Binah into the next sphere, Chesed. Chesed is the sphere of manifestation. Its symbols include the equal armed cross and the tetrahedron – a pyramid made of four equilateral triangles.

Chesed brings stability and order. However, too much stability and order result in stagnation and death. Therefore, to shake up the situation and cleave away the stagnant comes the next sephiroth, Geburah.

Geburah, Severity, is the sphere of Mars. Geburah is represented by a king in his armour on horseback setting out to war. When any growth has over-extended itself and is drawing too much resources, Geburah comes with a sword to cut it back to manageable size. In physiology, Geburah correlates with all catabolic processes – those that tear down the structures of the body. For example, heavy exercise burns up chemical nutrients, generates toxins and does some destruction to the muscles and other tissues. These processes are catabolic. Afterwards, given good nutrition and rest, the body repairs the damage, eliminates the toxins and builds up stronger muscles. These processes are anabolic. It is through the repeated alternation of the catabolic and anabolic process that muscle and strength are generated. Either one in excess leads to weakness and eventual collapse.

Severity has often been considered to be evil. Not so, Geburah. Geburah is the strong warrior with the sword of justice in his hand. The love we have for the king on his throne is not so vital as the awe we have for the king who defeats the enemy and brings freedom to the land. Likewise in our personal relations. The partner who exclusively expresses the mercy of Chesed may be dear to us, but awakens little passion. Geburah, the dragon-slayer who saves the damsel in distress, awakens far more intensity in our love.

Geburah is the surgeon who makes a clean cut, cutting away diseased tissue so the body can grow back to health. Geburah is associated with sacrifice. Sacrifice is not giving up something you want. It is the voluntary withdrawal of energy from one area so that more energy is available in another. One sacrifices some branches of a fruit tree so that new growth can emerge. And the most bountiful harvest is always upon the new growth. One sacrifices wood to produce fire. Sacrifice is the transformation of one type of energy into

another. Sacrifice all that holds you back from your chosen goals and you will find them swiftly coming true.

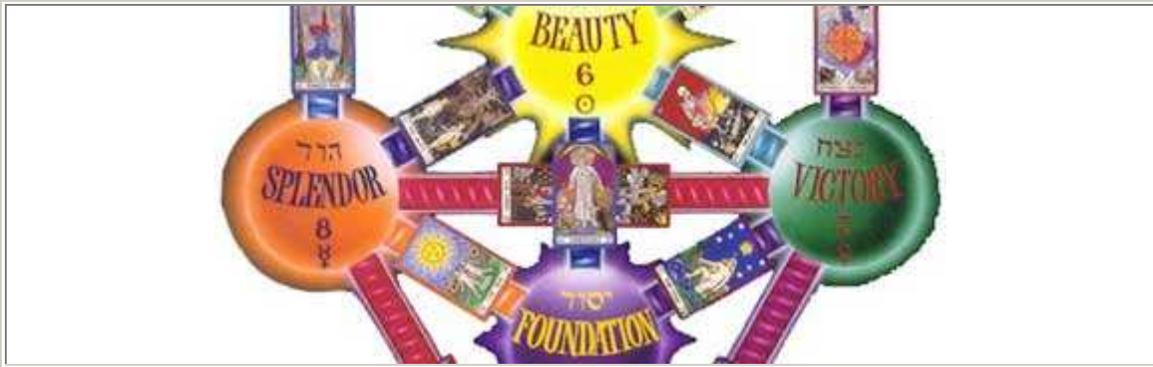
When someone is terrorising your territory, taking unfair advantage or inflicting harm upon others... when you are confronted by violence, the gentleness of Chesed will not aright the situation. Then the sword of Geburah, used not in rage but with passionate righteousness, is needed to correct the situation.

One great weakness of Christianity is its lack of equilibration. Equilibration acts by the rhythmic application of alternating principles over time. Christianity matches God against the devil in unending opposition. The eventual binding of the devil and casting him into the sea of fire at the end of time is the only offered solution. Compare this with Hinduism, which balances the generating, creative forces of Brahma with the destructive force of Shiva. Both are gods, functioning alternately to create the dynamic balance of the universe. The sword of Geburah is not the tool of the devil. Destruction is as important to life as construction. Each must alternate if life is to flourish. The sword of Geburah needs to be consecrated to good pure use. If we call it evil and refuse to wield it, others will wield it unfairly against us and ours.

The Christian ideals are meekness, mercy, kindness, and obedience – all ideal qualities of the slave but not of the dynamic leader. Christianity believes in a static God who is unchanging; the God who created the world and then sits back to let it get on with it. Because Christianity is static and has little concept of the necessary rhythm of life, it has made the mistake of insisting the opposite of the good is the evil. But the opposites of growth, expansion, mercy and kindness are not evil. After the flood, the water must ebb. If it continues to flood, all will drown!

As a result of this one-sided thinking, we live in a culture with a ridiculous double standard. Our ideal is to be good, kind and merciful. But to defend our honour and freedom, we must abandon our ideals or temporarily pretend that they do not exist. The solution to this cultural error lies in the realisation that wholeness and health are created only by the equilibration between the activity of Chesed and Geburah, seeing both as pure and good in their place and either as evil when misdirected or in excess.

Next upon the Tree, we find the great sphere of equilibration, Tiphareth, Beauty. Located equidistant between Kether and Malkuth upon the central pillar, to Tiphareth are ascribed all the great heroes and avatars who live a sacrificial life so that those below them can learn of that which is above. Tiphareth collects all the influences from above and presents them, simplified and more concrete, to all below.



When we first experience a level of our selfhood above the level of personality, it is Tiphareth we are perceiving. Seen from below in the triad of personality, Tiphareth looks like God. When we are still fixed in our personality, Tiphareth is as God or the Holy Guardian Angel to us. There is not enough space here to go into the Tarot key paths connecting each of the spheres, but let us at least look at the pathways connecting the three spheres of the personality to Tiphareth. For the personality, these are **the three faces of God**.

Connecting Netzach - Victory, the sphere of the desire nature to Tiphareth is the Tarot key Death. When we look toward God from our desires, we are confronted with the fact that no matter how many possessions we acquire, how many varied experiences we enjoy, how high in our careers we climb – at death we will lose it all. Looking at the nature of reality (God) from our personal desire nature, we see the grim reaper taking it all away.

Connecting Hod - Spendor, the sphere of the intellect to Tiphareth is the Tarot key of The Devil. The devil represents superficial appearances, that which is seen by the intellect. The devil is a absurd combination of parts from humanity and from various animals. Certainly all these things exist, but it takes a rather confused mind to put them all together this way. What does this represent? After having made experiences and gathered impressions, we draw conclusions. These conclusions lead us to expect that the kind of experiences and impressions will repeat. For example, after experiencing pain in love relationships several times, you may conclude that love always brings pain. When you believe this, you expect it. Expectations are self-fulfilling prophecies. If you expect something, you will unconsciously act so as to make it come true. When you install such a false belief in yourself, you have created a devil.

Notice that the chains that the conscious mind (the man) and the subconscious mind (the woman) wear around their necks are so loose that they could take them off any time. However, they don't and remain enslaved to the very devils that they have created. Devils are just inaccurate beliefs – creations of the intellect. When the intellect tries to see God, it sees the multifarious different parts of creation and, unless quite enlightened, misinterprets what it sees and makes devils of them.

Connecting Yesod, the sphere of the subconscious mind to Tiphareth is the Tarot key Temperance. The central figure of this key is the great Archangel Michael. When you are

looking toward the ultimate reality from Yesod, the level of your dreams and fantasies, it appears as the Holy Guardian Angel or as the Godhead itself.

Chesed, Geburah and Tiphareth form the triad of the evolving individualised consciousness, the Higher Self, the Holy Guardian Angel sometimes called the "Oversoul". It is this level of you that is neither born nor dies but rather projects itself into successive incarnations and gathers the impressions the personality makes in each incarnation back into itself.

Tiphareth is the great transformer, bringing that which is above into our reach. Most of our traditional religions reach no further than Tiphareth. As already mentioned, Tiphareth seen from Yesod below looks like God the Father. In Tiphareth, Source comes within the apprehension of normal human consciousness. It is here that God or Source seems to come to dwell with us.

In the Christian story of the "fall of man", God drove Adam and Eve out of Eden. Having obtained knowledge of the opposites, Adam fell from consciousness of unity. Remember that's what happened to Satan too. He was an angel "possessed of mind". The thinking mind is the "slayer of the real". By its very nature, it divides everything into parts and names each of them. When you become "possessed of mind", you descend to the level of Hod – the sphere below Tiphareth on the pillar of severity. The mind itself is not evil, but when separate from Source, it does generate much confusion. Remember that when looking from Hod toward Source, one sees only the superficial appearances and things do tend to look like the devil!

Tiphareth is the redeemer, identified in Christianity with Jesus. The redeemer seeks to bring us into awareness of and unity with our higher aspects. When energies go way out of balance in the worlds below, a highly evolved soul, a "God-man" or "God-woman" incarnates and is sacrificed. This frees great spiritual energies which help to re-establish balance between the higher and lower spheres of the Tree of Life.

The pantheistic faiths and the nature religions are on the level of Yesod. Christianity or rather "Churchianity" is a religion of Tiphareth. The whole mystery is about a child of God who lives a sacrificial life to assist humanity to again be in contact with God. The metaphysical religions such as Buddhism aim toward Kether. But all major religions have both an outer or "exoteric" form, which is often rather pantheistic as well as a secret "esoteric" or mystical aspect. Christianity too has its devotional mystics, though these are rarely recognised or honoured while they are still alive. Placing Christian symbolism upon the tree, Kether is the Father, Tiphareth is the son and Yesod is the sphere of the Holy Spirit. The Christ united these three, elevating the pantheistic visionary Yesod consciousness and bringing down the metaphysical Kether consciousness into the mystery of the unity of the trinity, the three-in-one.

Kether is metaphysical. Yesod is psychic and visionary. In Tiphareth, one raised above the often delusive visions and voices of Yesod into the more rarefied atmosphere of pure intuitional awareness. The mystical experience, which is experienced as a feeling, occurs

in the sphere of Tiphareth. In Tiphareth, we build up a body of new experiences and images representing them. Then when illumination comes, there is something to cast light upon. Otherwise, illumination is just a flash in the darkness – enough to let us know that there is something higher, but not what its nature is. We need to build up the "language" of the higher life before we can consciously live in it. This higher imagery belongs to the sphere of Tiphareth.

In Tiphareth, we access a higher type of mentation. Consciousness here is pure. There are neither visions nor voices characteristic of the level of Yesod. Awareness is intensified and there is a sense of exaltation. The mind on this level penetrates beyond appearances and has great powers of insight. When functioning upon this level, you can feel into situations and persons with great intuition. This higher consciousness is recognised by its intensity, its intuitive knowing, and by the absence of any sensory imagery whatsoever. The still small voice of the Higher Self is only heard when the din of the many voices of Yesod is stilled.

To attain to this higher consciousness, you need great intensity bordering and entering into the ecstatic. This Dionysian aspect has a lower expression in uncontrolled lust as well as a higher aspect that opens the door of the mysteries. We see this higher aspect portrayed in the writing of Christian mystics who use the metaphors of human love to describe the divine inebriation experienced in their inner meetings with God. This is sacred love. Without this passionate exaltation, religion remains in the lower worlds and cannot transform consciousness to burn bright upon the high altar of Source awareness.



In mystery schools as in individual aspiration, at first imagery is used. One may wear certain clothing of specific colours, burn incense of particular composition, light candles, dance to chosen music, chant divine and archangelic names and call upon the higher consciousness with fervour. The singing of inspirational songs coupled with the longing for divine contact can serve the purpose well. As your exaltation arises to a climax, the imagery will burn away into a clear light of higher consciousness. This light burns and by its very nature cannot be withstood for long. But it changes the personality and expands the mind in ways that do last. In a very real sense, the personality is impregnated with seeds of light that continue to transform it into a vehicle more capable of withstanding and transmitting ever greater quantities of living light.

The initiated trained in the Qabalah uses such ecstasy-producing ritual to lift the consciousness from the body consciousness of Malkuth through the psychism of Yesod into the clear light of Tiphareth and back again with precision and safety. From the intuition and inspiration of Tiphareth, he or she returns – creating new visions in the astral substance of Yesod and carrying them forth into physical reality in Malkuth. It is in the descent from Tiphareth into Yesod and then into Malkuth that the new "Jerusalem" is brought down to earth. Only elevating consciousness from body awareness into the

psychism of Yesod results in distorted awareness and can lure the unknowing soul into the vices so prevalent in the mass-mind levels of Yesod. Seeker beware!

Tiphareth is the sphere of the sun and its related metal, Gold. The sun is the source of our life on earth and is closer related to us than most realise. Tiphareth rules the breast, which contains the lungs and the heart. The mystery tradition tells us that the sphere of Tiphareth, when placed upon the body, is located in the area below the heart in the solar plexus. It is here that we absorb and utilise solar energy much like plants utilise solar energy with their chlorophyll to construct sugars and other complex chemicals.

If we are cut off from this subtle solar energy, we grow pale in energy and ineffective in our efforts. It is repression that causes us to block this life force from entering our being. No one got to Heaven by avoiding the lessons of earth. The forces of nature must flow clearly, cleanly and powerfully through our beings before we attempt to elevate them into spiritual realms. There are many examples of people who, as a result of being unsuccessful at human relations, have escaped by trying to be spiritual. You cannot sublimate a neurosis and expect pure healthy spiritual results.

Nor will unbridled lust elevate us – quite the opposite. A healthy vigorous attitude and expression of the great forces of gender is required before one can bring the life forces toward higher expression in the spiritual realms. In Tiphareth, we have the spiritual manifesting in the natural world. For our spiritual health, we need to worship the sun god in his sacrificial journey, bringing light of the spiritual down into our world. The ascension we seek is actually the descent of the divine into the personal. This mystical experience takes place in Tiphareth.



Below the triad of the individuality, we meet the triad of personality consisting of Netzach (Victory), Hod (Splendour) and Yesod (Foundation). Their colours are the mixed colours – Green, Orange and Violet. Note how each of these is the colour created by mixing the two above it. The green of Netzach is a blend of the blue of Mercy and the yellow of Tiphareth. The orange of Hod is a blend of the red of Severity and the Yellow of Tiphareth. The violet of Yesod is a blend of the blue of Mercy and the red of Severity. There is a crossing over of influences through Tiphareth. Chesed, the higher mind is reflected through Tiphareth to the other side of the tree in Hod, the personal mind. The fiery Mars energy of Geburah is reflected through Tiphareth into Mar's consort Venus in Netzach.

The four lower spheres are the only ones consciously accessible to the average human. These are the three spheres of the personality and the physical body consciousness of Malkuth. The substance of these four spheres is amenable to human consciousness. In Tiphareth, the influences descend from above. The substance in the spheres below Tiphareth is "ideoplastic" meaning that it takes on forms from the visualisations of human minds. If enough humans visualise the same thing over a great span of time, these human-generated thought forms take on a powerful life of their own.

Primitive humans observed nature and created gods and goddesses to represent the great forces they saw about them. Also, abstract concepts such as beauty were also so represented. These gods and goddesses were creations of their minds, but they represent

great forces that do exist. Through worship of their self-created images, they came into energetic contact with the great forces themselves. In our evolved monotheistic viewpoint, these forces represent aspects of the one God.

By worshipping the goddess of beauty, that aspect of their own nature comes into contact with the great force of nature and is influenced by it. In our example, worship of the goddess of beauty would make the worshipper more capable of perceiving and appreciating beauty. In this way, aspects of human consciousness in the race mind developed over the centuries.

It's important to note that while the gods and goddesses are creations of the human mind, what they represent is very real and potent indeed. Thus the wise student of the mysteries, while not believing in the gods, does intelligently worship them in order to develop contact with the forces they represent.

Worship of the gods in Netzach is accomplished neither by a philosophical idea of the intellect (Hod) nor by the imagery of Yesod but rather by means of the arts. It is through dance, music, singing, chanting or the more passive studio arts (painting, sculpting etc.) that one contacts the "angels" of Netzach. Work in any of the further spheres of the Tree of Life depends upon successful contact with the energetic beings of Netzach. By representing the deity in the symbolism of his art, the aspirant connects to that aspect of life within his soul.

Most people are aware only of their bodies and their minds. Most everything else is out of their awareness. The body and the mind are the concrete aspects of manifestation. The ensouling forces that precede manifestation and build it are unknown to most. These are the forces of Netzach (the instincts) and Yesod (the etheric body).

The symbol best representing Netzach is the rose, the flower of Venus. Netzach is the sphere of Venus, the goddess of love. It is the vital force of love, the generative force, the force that excites more than anything else. It is again noted that a reverent attitude toward the energy expressed in reproduction is necessary for practical advancement in the mysteries. Love in its lower forms, stimulated from below, is compulsive, debilitating and unstabilising. Love that draws its inspiration from above is energising and ennobling. One can only be said to have mastered the sphere of Netzach when he or she can respond to love in a healthy way on all levels, but can also resist its call.

Netzach, Victory is best understood in contrast to its partner across the Tree of Life – Hod, Splendour. Netzach is the sphere of the instincts and emotions. Hod is the sphere of the concrete mind. We all have lots of experience of the opposition of these two. We know well what we should do (Hod), but this often conflicts with what we want (Netzach).

Notice that Netzach precedes Hod. You ought to know what you feel – what you want – before you decide what you think is the right thing to do. Making decisions before you know what you feel is tyrannical. The tyrant king rules without knowing or caring about the desires of his people. Many modern people are just such tyrants in their own lives,

making decisions based upon what they believe to be "right" before they even know or consider what they want.

The progression down the Tree of Life is toward ever more concrete manifestation of consciousness. In Netzach, there are life forms that are like a phantasmagoria of dancing faeries. Their consciousness consists of a group-mind. In Hod, the group mind of Netzach becomes individualised. Here individual consciousness begins for the first time. Hod is the sphere of Mercury who represents the thinking mind, the rational intellect.

It is the rational mind that establishes limitations and places limits upon the unbridled expression of desire. The mind directs the force of the will. It is the concentrated force of the will that defines the direction to proceed. But without the emotional empathy and responsiveness to love typical of Netzach, no power will flow into the aspirant's work.

We all know too many people, especially men, who live all "in their heads" without feelings "in their hearts". This is almost a plague of modern life. However, when the emotions rule, there is also a danger – not of intellectual dryness but of unrestrained indulgence. A dynamic balance of the two is necessary. Powerful emotions focused and directed with mental discipline are keys to the mysteries. The mighty **archangel Michael** is assigned to Hod. Michael, like St. George, is often shown subduing the animal nature. Subduing without killing it is the key to power.



The supreme virtue of Hod is truthfulness. Know the truth. It is the truth that shall set you free.

When we first arise in consciousness out of the physical, it is likely into the psychism of Yesod, the Foundation. Here we hear voices and see visions. Discarnate entities reside here who can see much about us – things that we do not have access to – and thus impress us. However, psychic awareness is not necessarily spiritual. Such entities may seek to win you over to their causes, which may be less than holy! There is great danger here and the Qabalistic method is to awaken awareness of Tiphareth before exploring Yesod. This means awakening the heart chakra before activating the lower chakras. Then the substance of Yesod can be formed into patterns in harmony with the images and inspiration received from Tiphareth and above. This is the way to bring Heaven to Earth.

Yesod is the sphere of the moon. Look at the symbolism of the middle pillar of the Tree of Life. Malkuth, the earth, is at the bottom. Then Yesod, sphere of the moon. Above Yesod is Tiphareth, the sun and above Tiphareth is Kether, the pure light of oneness. Descending, the pure light takes form as sunlight then as reflected moonlight before reaching earth. Yesod reflects the sunlight of Tiphareth to Malkuth, the earth. Yesod is like a mirror, but it reflects both ways. It can mirror the light from above down to us, but it can also mirror ourselves back to us. Many make the error of seeing visions in the mirror of Yesod – images that reflect their own distorted traits back to them – and imagine that they are receiving divine revelation.

Yesod is the sphere of formation. It is here that the patterns from above are turned into blueprints for manifestation upon the physical level. Yesod consists of a peculiar non-physical substance that is at once both living mind and inert matter. This is the astral light, the ether, the od, the akasha. Yesod is "programmed" by images from above and forms the matrix for these images to manifest upon the earth. But it is also formed by all the imagery generated by humans. For this reason, it is a treacherous place to enter, especially from below by raising up in consciousness from Malkuth. In the lower astral levels of Yesod, there are all the thought forms generated by humans throughout history. All the lust, greed, hatred, avarice, sloth, anger and pain of the human race is represented here, loud and clear. Beautiful images exist here as well.

Yesod is said to purify the emanations and correct them. Any work that is directed toward producing changes in the physical world must take place through the action of this sphere. The subtle substance of Yesod follows the actions of the mind. The grids of energy of Yesod form the matrix upon which molecules crystallise into solid forms of matter. It is in Yesod that the faeries weave the energy forms that guide the formation of the tissues of all living beings. We can only speak of these things in metaphors, but the reality behind the stories is undeniable.

Yesod is the treasure house of images, of Maya, of illusion. Although it does contain the worst images generated by the human race, it is also the sphere through which Malkuth, body consciousness, receives the beauty and truth from all the higher spheres of the tree of life. It is our responsibility to purify Yesod and replace the patterns of separation, fear and pain with those of love, beauty and joy.

Yesod in the body corresponds to the generative organs. This is where the divine force burns most brightly in the human body. Yesod is the sphere of the moon and thus corresponds to all the rhythmic cycles outside in nature and inside within human nature.

At the base of the Tree of Life is its flower, Malkuth, the Kingdom. Malkuth receives the influence of all the sephiroth above. Malkuth is Kalah, the bride. In Malkuth, the mixed colours of the triad of personality are mixed again forming the earth colours – olive, citrine, russet and black. These correspond to the four elements of the ancients – earth, water, air and fire. In modern physics, these four are referred to as the four states of matter – solids, liquids, gasses and radiant energy. The Qabalists say that there are four levels of matter. The lowest, earth of Malkuth, is inanimate matter. The water of Malkuth finds form in matter that is organised into living beings. The air of Malkuth is considered to be the vital principle of physical life. The fire of Malkuth is a most tenuous subtle substance, more amenable to mental direction than the other three. It is for this reason that the occultist aims to influence this fire of earth for thereby he can effect the other three and produce desired changes in the substances of the physical world.

Malkuth is the only stable sphere of the Tree of Life and herein lies its power. Here in the physical world, it takes time to produce change. Imagine what would occur if the physical world immediately changed to reflect your thoughts and feelings! You could create

wonders, but as soon as you imagined something worthy of causing fear, you would create that as well. "What a wonderful world! But are there crocodiles?" Munch! Down come the jaws upon you. For our stage of growth, we need the inertia of the physical to give us time to experience the results of our imaging more slowly.

Malkuth is the lowest point of manifestation. But it is not therefore something deplorable or debased. In fact, it is the flower of the Tree of Life. For the incarnating soul, arrival in Malkuth indicates that half the race is completed. It is like the half-way marker in a race that one circles around and then returns to the starting point. If you turn back before running around the marker, you are disqualified. Similarly, you must learn the lessons of the physical before you are allowed to start your journey back home from whence you came.

No magical operation can be considered to be successful until it produces an effect in Malkuth. Generating energy on higher levels through meditation or ritual without bringing the energy down into the body can and does cause trouble. It's not enough to have visions of how Heaven on earth would be. It is our duty and responsibility to live our visions in our personal activities and relations with other humans. It is in the fiery trial of human relationship that we are tried. Can we to live the love, truth and beauty that we have experienced in moments of high intuition and ecstasy with our partner here in real physical life? This is the real challenge of Malkuth.

For now we have completed our journeys through the Tree of Life. As we have seen, it is a fertile ground for further research, both through books, lectures, studies, meditation, ritual and living the principles in our daily life.

