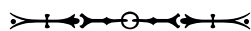


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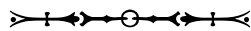
VOLUME 90 NUMBER 2 2012

KABBALAH

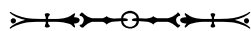
Each issue of the *Rosicrucian Digest* provides members and all interested readers with a compendium of materials regarding the ongoing flow of the Rosicrucian Timeline. The articles, historical excerpts, art, and literature included in this *Digest* span the ages, and are not only interesting in themselves, but also seek to provide a lasting reference shelf to stimulate continuing study of all of those factors which make up Rosicrucian history and thought. Therefore, we present classical background, historical development, and modern reflections on each of our subjects, using the many forms of primary sources, reflective commentaries, the arts, creative fiction, and poetry.



This magazine is dedicated to all the women and men throughout the ages who have contributed to and perpetuated the wisdom of the Rosicrucian, Western esoteric, Tradition.



May we ever be worthy of the light with which we have been entrusted.



In this issue, we explore the tradition received from Kabbalah, from its ancient beginnings to its practical application in the present day.

# ROSICRUCIAN DIGEST

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# KABBALAH: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

*Joshua Maggid, Ph.D., FRC*



**T**here are strong connections with Kabbalah in Rosicrucianism and Martinism, and Kabbalah remains an important aspect of the teachings of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC and the Traditional Martinist Order. In this article, Joshua Maggid, a longtime Rosicrucian and Martinist who has studied Kabbalah for many years, presents a brief overview of Kabbalah, including Jewish, Christian, and Hermetic Kabbalah.

For those beginning to learn about it, Kabbalah can be difficult and confusing. Different books say different things. Any two books on Kabbalah may address completely different topics, or they may provide conflicting definitions and interpretations of the same material. In addition, authors use different English spellings for the same Hebrew terms.

One reason for this is that there are several different systems or traditions that all refer to themselves as “Kabbalah.” There is Jewish Kabbalah, Christian Kabbalah, and Hermetic Kabbalah.<sup>1</sup> Christian and Hermetic Kabbalah borrow concepts, terms, and techniques from Jewish Kabbalah, but they may use them differently, and they incorporate elements from other traditions. Even within traditional Jewish Kabbalah, because it has existed over many centuries and in different parts of the world, there have developed a variety of different systems, schools, and methods.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, there has also appeared a kind of “New Age Kabbalah,” which takes elements of

traditional Jewish Kabbalah out of their religious context and presents them as a collection of practical techniques for finding happiness, fulfillment, prosperity, relationships, etc.

Another common way of classifying different types of Kabbalah is according to the kinds of activities involved.

“Theoretical Kabbalah” or “Theosophical Kabbalah” includes a system of metaphysics, a description of the inner workings of Divinity and how it interacts with the material world, and methods of deriving esoteric interpretations of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

“Meditative Kabbalah” consists of a wide variety of practices aimed at attaining higher states of consciousness, exploring the spiritual realm, encountering the Divine, and receiving new spiritual insights.<sup>4</sup> This is also referred to as “Mystical Kabbalah” and “Prophetic Kabbalah.”

“Practical Kabbalah” refers to theurgy and magic, attempting to influence the Divine Realm and produce practical effects in the material world. To some extent, however, these distinctions can be somewhat arbitrary. Some modern authors in the Hermetic or Magical tradition see magic more as a system of spiritual development rather than an exercise of personal power.<sup>5</sup>

## **Jewish Kabbalah**

Some authors apply the word “Kabbalah” to all of Jewish mysticism, going back thousands of years, including



the *Merkavah* tradition and even the Biblical prophets. Others reserve the term “Kabbalah” for the specific form of Jewish mysticism that began around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE in southern France and in Spain. That was when the word “Kabbalah” was first used to refer to these writings and activities.

*Merkavah* Mysticism (The Work of the Chariot) is sometimes classified as pre-Kabbalistic or as Early Kabbalah. Its dates are usually given as starting around the second century BCE and continuing for about a thousand years. These mystics would meditate and send their souls upward, proceeding through a series of seven holy palaces or chambers. Each chamber provides a different spiritual experience. They hoped to eventually reach the seventh and highest chamber and receive a divine vision like the one described by the prophet Ezekiel [1:1-28].

The *Sefer Yetzirah*<sup>6</sup> (The Book of Formation) is often called the oldest Kabbalistic text.<sup>7</sup> It describes in detail how God used the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet to create everything in the universe. When properly interpreted, it can also be read as a meditation manual that describes a number of meditation techniques using the Hebrew letters. Traditionally attributed to the Biblical patriarch Abraham, the origin of the *Sefer Yetzirah* is unknown, but some date it to around the second or third century CE.

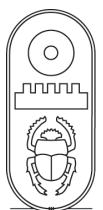
The *Sefer ha Zohar*<sup>8</sup> (The Book of Splendor) is generally acknowledged to be the most important Kabbalistic writing. Not a single book, but a collection of books, the Zohar contains esoteric interpretations of the Holy Scriptures and descriptions of the inner workings of the Divine Realm. Much of it is in the form of stories about Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his companions, traveling around the Holy Land and discussing the hidden meanings of the scriptures. Manuscripts of portions

of the Zohar were first circulated in Spain by Rabbi Moshe de Leon in the 1290s. He claimed that he found them, and that they were written by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in the second century CE. Academic scholars generally believe that the Zohar was actually written by de Leon himself, or possibly by a group with which he was associated. It may have incorporated or expanded upon earlier oral traditions. Mostly written in a form of Aramaic, much of the Zohar is extremely arcane and notoriously difficult to understand.



Statue of Moshe de Leon in Guadalajara, Spain.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe\\_de\\_Leon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe_de_Leon)

In the sixteenth century, the city of Safed (*Tzfat*), in what is now Israel, was a major center of the flourishing of Kabbalah. Many important figures emerged in Safed at that time, but the most influential figure for Kabbalah was Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572), often referred to as “the Ari” or “the Arizal.” He provided a new approach to understanding and interpreting the Zohar, and he constructed a very detailed description of the creation of the universe, the divine emanations, and the process of reincarnation.<sup>9</sup>



During the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, science and rationality came to the fore, and interest in mysticism diminished. In Judaism, the failure of the messianic Sabbatean movement in the seventeenth century had discredited Kabbalah in the eyes of many, and mysticism generally lost its appeal. While Kabbalah was attacked and suppressed by the dominant forces, a form of Kabbalah was perpetuated by the Hassidic movement starting in the eighteenth century in Eastern Europe. Hassidism conveyed Kabbalah in a somewhat popularized form that allowed for encountering the Divine in nature and everyday life rather than exclusively through scriptural study and complex meditative techniques.

Gershom Scholem (1897-1982) was a Jewish philosopher and historian who founded the modern academic study of Kabbalah. Born and raised in Germany, he later emigrated to what is now Israel, where he became the first Professor of Jewish Mysticism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Scholem, and the students he trained and influenced, helped to make Kabbalah widely available to the lay public.

### **Christian Kabbalah**

In the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, during the European Renaissance, Kabbalistic writings were translated from Hebrew into Latin and became widely available to Christian scholars. Kabbalistic concepts and methods were adopted by some Christian theologians, giving rise to what is called Christian Kabbalah.<sup>10</sup> Christian Kabbalists also assimilated aspects of the Hermetic and Platonic writings, which were also translated into Latin during this period, associating Christian Kabbalah with Hermetic magic and Neoplatonist theurgy.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) had books on Kabbalah translated from Hebrew into Latin, and he also wrote books on Kabbalah. He argued that the Catholic Church should incorporate Kabbalah and magic into Christian theology. Pico believed that, by employing Kabbalistic methods of esoteric interpretation, he could use the Hebrew Scriptures to prove the truth of Christian teachings such as the divinity of Jesus and the doctrine of the Trinity. One of his famous “Nine Hundred Theses” was: “There is no science that assures us more of the divinity of Christ than magic and Cabala.”<sup>11</sup>



Statue of Giordano Bruno in the Campo dei Fiori in Rome, where he was burned at the stake in 1600.  
<http://www.glebedigital.co.uk/blog/?p=999>

Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), a Christian scholar who studied Greek and Hebrew, was influenced by the work of Pico della Mirandola. He wrote books in Latin on Kabbalah<sup>12</sup> and argued that Kabbalah should be accepted by the Church because it proved the truth of Christian teachings and could be used to convert Jews to Catholicism.

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535) drew extensively from Kabbalah throughout his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*,<sup>13</sup> a very influential compendium of Western occultism and magic.

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) was a Dominican friar who studied the works of Pico, Reuchlin, and Agrippa, and wrote several books himself.<sup>14</sup> He traveled around Europe trying to find a royal patron who would support him in his quest to have the Church adopt Kabbalah and magic. Bruno did not find the support he sought, and he made the mistake of returning to Rome, where he was arrested by the Inquisition and burned at the stake for heresy in 1600.

Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689) translated parts of the Zohar and other Kabbalistic works from Hebrew into Latin in a compendium called *Kabbala Denudata* (The Kabbalah Unveiled).

At first, Christian Kabbalah was a public movement seeking recognition by the Catholic Church. The Church never accepted it, and finally suppressed it, but it was perpetuated in esoteric movements including Rosicrucianism,<sup>15</sup> Freemasonry,<sup>16</sup> and Martinism.

In her history of *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, Frances Yates says that “Christian Cabala’ and ‘Rosicrucianism’ may be synonymous.”<sup>17</sup> She goes on to say that

The philosophy of Christian Cabala as expressed by Giorgi and Agrippa is very close to the so-called Rosicrucian philosophy, as expressed in the Rosicrucian manifestos and by Robert Fludd . . . We can now better understand the history of Rosicrucianism by linking it with the history of Christian Cabala as carried into the Elizabethan age.<sup>18</sup>

## Hermetic Kabbalah

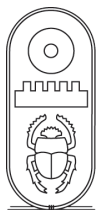
In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as it developed in underground esoteric movements, Christian Kabbalah gradually incorporated more pagan elements and alchemical symbolism. By the late nineteenth century, the term “Hermetic Kabbalah” was used to distinguish it from the Christian Kabbalah of the Renaissance.

Alphonse Louis Constant, writing under the name of Eliphas Levi (1810-1875), connected the cards of the Tarot deck with the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, the ten *Sefirot* of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, and the *Sefer Yetzirah*.<sup>19</sup>

One of the most familiar names from that era is Dr. Gerard Encausse, known as Papus (1868-1916). He was involved in several esoteric societies and was a co-founder of the Ordre Martiniste (Martinist Order) and the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix, whose membership was limited to Martinists who had attained the S.I. degree, and was structured around three degrees named Bachelor of Kabbalah, Master of Kabbalah, and Doctor of Kabbalah.<sup>20</sup> His books include *The Qabalah: Secret Tradition of the West*.<sup>21</sup>

The best known and most influential of the hermetic occult societies was the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which was founded in England in the late 1800s. Its focus was Ceremonial Magic, and it included considerable Kabbalistic material along with other mystical and magical traditions.<sup>22</sup> S. L. MacGregor Mathers, who was one of the order’s founders, translated Knorr von Rosenroth’s *Kabbalah Unveiled* from Latin into English.<sup>23</sup>

Dion Fortune (1890-1946) was a member of several esoteric and occult groups, and later formed her own organization, called “The Fraternity of the Inner Light” (later renamed “The Society of the Inner Light”). Her most famous and influential book is *The Mystical Qabalah*.<sup>24</sup>



## Conclusions

Because of the wide variety of ideas and practices that have been included under the term “Kabbalah,” when reading books on this topic, it can be very helpful to identify the specific tradition and branch of Kabbalah that the author is presenting.

There are strong connections with Kabbalah in Rosicrucianism and Martinism, and Kabbalah remains an important aspect of the teachings of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC and the Traditional Martinist Order.



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## ENDNOTES

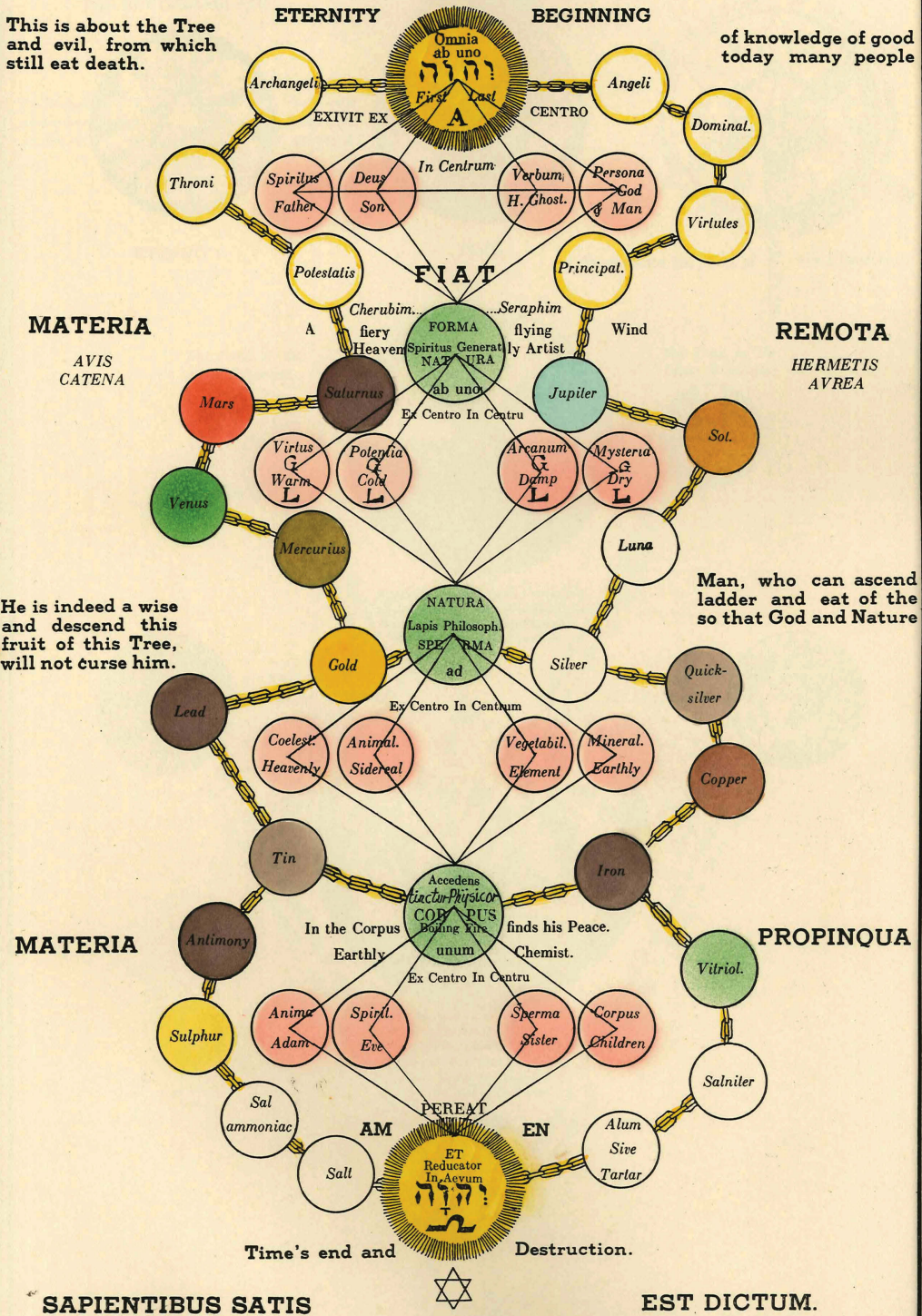
1. In books on Christian Kabbalah, “Kabbalah” is generally spelled with a “C” (e.g., Cabala), probably because the original sources were written in Latin. Hermetic Kabbalah books tend to spell it with an initial “Q” (e.g., Qabalah). Books on Jewish Kabbalah most often use the initial letter “K,” possibly because of early books written in German. While these conventions are not always observed, an author’s spelling can often be a clue to which system the book is presenting. For the sake of simplicity, except for direct quotations from other sources, only the spelling “Kabbalah” is used in this article.
2. For a general survey, see Perle Epstein, *Kabbalah: The Way of the Jewish Mystic* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001). For a brief and accessible historical synopsis, see the DVD, *Decoding the Past: Secrets of Kabbalah* (The History Channel, 2006).
3. E.g., Kim Zetter, *Simple Kabbalah* (Conari Press, 2000; distributed by Red Wheel/Weiser, York Beach, ME).
4. E.g., Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1982).
5. E.g., Dion Fortune, *The Mystical Qabalah* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1984).
6. Isidor Kalisch, trans., *Sepher Yetzirah: A Book on Creation* (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 2002). Aryeh Kaplan, trans., *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation*, rev. ed. (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1997).
7. E.g., Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, ix.
8. Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). Daniel C. Matt, trans., *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, multiple vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004- ).
9. Hayyim Vital, *The Tree of Life: Chayyim Vital’s Introduction to the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria. Volume I: The Palace of Adam Kadmon*, trans. Donald Wilder Menzi and Zwe Padeh (New York: Arizal Publications, 2008).
10. Joseph Dan, ed., *The Christian Kabbalah: Jewish Mystical Books & Their Christian Interpreters* (Cambridge: Harvard College Library, 1997).
11. S. A. Farmer, trans., *Syncretism in the West: Pico’s 900 Theses (1486)* (Tempe: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 2008), 497.
12. Johann Reuchlin, *On the Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, trans. Martin and Sarah Goodman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).
13. Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, trans. James Freake, ed. & annotated by Donald Tyson (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 2000).
14. Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
15. Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge, 2001), 197-205.
16. Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 2002), 262-277.
17. Yates, *Occult Philosophy*, 105.
18. *Ibid.*, 195.
19. Eliphas Levi, *The Book of Splendours: The Inner Mysteries of Qabalism* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1984), 130-131.
20. Christian Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History and Mysteries* (San Jose: Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, 2005), 138.
21. Papus, *The Qabalah: Secret Tradition of the West*, trans. W. N. Schors (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2000).
22. Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1989).
23. S. L. MacGregor Mathers, trans., *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006).
24. See note 5.



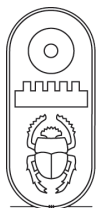
**SCALA PHILOSOPHORUM CABALISTICA MAGIA**  
 atque arbor aurea  
 DE MYSTERIIS NUMERIS QUATERNARIJ, QUINARIJ ATQUE SEPTENARIJ.

This is about the Tree and evil, from which still eat death.

of knowledge of good today many people



Scala Philosophorum Cabalistica Magia. From the Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries, hand colored by H. Spencer Lewis.



# INTRODUCTION TO THE *SEFER YETZIRAH*

## *Aryeh Kaplan*

*As a graduate student, Aryeh Kaplan was described in a scientific Who's Who as the most promising young physicist in America. He later devoted himself to writing and teaching of the Torah. During his short lifetime (he died suddenly in 1983 at the age of forty-eight), Rabbi Kaplan wrote more than fifty books. In the text that follows, Rabbi Kaplan introduces us to the extraordinary Kabbalistic work, the Sefer Yetzirah.*

Material excerpted from the book SEFER YETZIRAH: THE BOOK OF CREATION © 1997 by The Estate of Aryeh Kaplan. Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC, Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA. Orders may be placed at [www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com) or by calling 800.423.7087.

The *Sefer Yetzirah* is without question the oldest and most mysterious of all Kabbalistic texts. The first commentaries on this book were written in the tenth century, and the text itself is quoted as early as the sixth. References to the work appear in the first century, while traditions regarding its use attest to its existence even in Biblical times. So ancient is this book that its origins are no longer accessible to historians. We are totally dependent on traditions with regard to its authorship.

Equally mysterious is the meaning of this book. If the author meant to be obscure, he was eminently successful. It is only through the most careful analysis, studying every word with its parallels in Biblical and Talmudic literature, that its haze of obscurity begins to be penetrated.

There have been many interpretations of the *Sefer Yetzirah*. The earliest commentators tried to interpret it as a philosophical treatise, but their efforts shed more light on their own systems than on the text. The same is true of efforts to fit it into the systems of the Zohar or later Kabbalists. Efforts to view it as a book on grammar or phonetics are even more unsuccessful.

In general, the Kabbalah is divided into three categories, the theoretical, the meditative, and the magical.<sup>1</sup> The theoretical Kabbalah, which in its present

form is based largely on the Zohar, is concerned mostly with the dynamics of the spiritual domain, especially the worlds of the Sefirot, souls, and angels. This branch of Kabbalah reached its zenith in the writings of the Safed school in the sixteenth century, and the vast majority of published texts belong in this category.

Meditative Kabbalah deals with the use of divine names, letter permutations, and similar methods to reach higher states of consciousness, and as such, comprises a kind of yoga. Most of the main texts have never been published, but remain scattered in manuscripts in the great libraries and museums. Some of these methods enjoyed a brief renaissance in the mid 1700s with the rise of the Hasidic movement, but within a half century they were once again largely forgotten.

The third category of Kabbalah—the magical—is closely related to the meditative. It consists of various signs, incantations, and divine names, through which one can influence or alter natural events. Many of the techniques closely resemble meditative methods, and their success may depend on their ability to induce mental states where telekinetic or spiritual power can effectively be channeled. As with the second category, the most important texts have never been printed, although some fragments have

been published. One of the best examples of these is the book *Raziel*.

Careful study indicates that *Sefer Yetzirah* is a meditative text, with strong magical overtones. This position is supported by the earliest Talmudic traditions, which indicate that it could be used to create living creatures. Especially significant are the many reports and legends in which the *Sefer Yetzirah* is used to create a Golem, a sort of mystical android. The methods of the *Sefer Yetzirah* appear to involve meditation; and it is highly possible that it was originally written as a meditative manual. A major twelfth century philosopher thus states that it does not contain philosophy, but divine mystery.<sup>2</sup> This comes across very clearly in the commentary of one of the greatest Kabbalists, Isaac the Blind (1160-1236), who stresses the meditative aspects of the text.

It is also particularly evident in a very ancient manuscript of the *Sefer Yetzirah*, dating from the tenth century or earlier. The introductory colophon states, "This is the book of the Letters of Abraham our father, which is called *Sefer Yetzirah*, and when one gazes (*tzafah*) into it, there is no limit to his wisdom."<sup>3</sup> ...The Hebrew word *tzafah* does not denote mere physical gazing, but mystical meditative insight. This very early source would therefore support the position that *Sefer Yetzirah* was meant to be used as a meditative text.

The commentaries which treat *Sefer Yetzirah* as a theoretical text read much of it in the third person: "He combined," "He formed," and the like. According to this reading, the text is referring to God's creation. In many cases, however, the grammatical form more closely resembles the imperative.<sup>4</sup> The author is telling the reader to "combine" and "form" as if he was actually giving instructions. In many other cases, the text is unambiguously instructive, as in such passages as, "if your heart runs, return to the place," and, "understand with

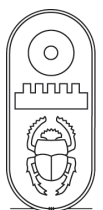
wisdom, and be wise with understanding." Rather than have the text oscillate between the third person and the imperative, it would certainly be more logical to read it all in the imperative. The *Sefer Yetzirah* thus becomes an instruction manual for a very special type of meditation...

What we therefore have in *Sefer Yetzirah* appears to be an instructional manual, describing certain meditative exercises. There is some evidence that these exercises were meant to strengthen the initiate's concentration, and were particularly helpful in the development of telekinetic and telepathic powers. It was with these powers that one would then be able to perform feats that outwardly appeared to be magical. This is supported by the Talmudical references, which appear to compare the use of *Sefer Yetzirah* to a kind of white magic.<sup>5</sup> An important thirteenth century commentator writes that students of *Sefer Yetzirah* were given a manuscript of the book *Raziel*, a magical text containing seals, magical figures, divine names, and incantations.<sup>6</sup>

## The Text

The *Sefer Yetzirah* is a very small and concise book. In its Short Version, it is only some 1,300 words long, while the Long Version contains approximately 2,500 words. The Gra Version contains around 1,800 words. So short is the text, that one of the earliest fragments appears to have the entire book written on a single page.<sup>7</sup> There is speculation that the original source may have contained as few as 240 words.<sup>8</sup>

The present text contains six chapters, and in some editions, these are said to parallel the six orders of the Mishnah.<sup>9</sup> Some ancient sources, however, state that the book contains five chapters, and it seems likely that the present fifth and sixth chapters were combined as one in these texts.<sup>10</sup> The earliest commentator, Saadia Gaon, in a somewhat different version,





divides the book into eight chapters.<sup>11</sup>

The text is presented dogmatically, without substantiation or explanation. In the first chapter in particular, it is solemn and sonorous, reading like blank verse poetry. Very few Biblical passages are quoted, and with the exception of Abraham, no name or authority is mentioned.

The book seems to be divided into four basic parts. The first chapter introduces the Sefirot, speaking of them at length. After this, however, there is no mention whatsoever regarding the Sefirot in subsequent chapters. This had led to some speculation that the *Sefer Yetzirah* might actually be a combination of two (or more) earlier texts.

The second chapter consists of a general discussion about the letters of the alphabet. It clearly appears to be introducing their use in a meditative context. Also introduced in this chapter are the five phonetic families and the 231 Gates. Again, neither the phonetic families nor the Gates are ever again mentioned in the text.

Chapters three to five discuss the three divisions of the letters, “mothers, doubles, and elementals.” These are related to the “universe, soul, and year,” presenting a fairly detailed astrological system. In these chapters, the entire thrust of the book is changed, and they contain virtually no hint whatsoever of its meditative aspects. This, however, can be explained by a principle found in many later Kabbalistic texts. In order to focus spiritual and mental powers, one must take into account the time and astrological environment.<sup>12</sup>

The sixth chapter again does not appear to have a clear connection to the earlier parts of the book, although in the Long Version, it is presented almost as a commentary. Here, for the first time, are introduced the concepts of the “axis, cycle, and heart,” ideas which are not discussed any place else in Hebraic or

Kabbalistic literature, with the exception of the *Bahir*.<sup>13</sup> Of all the chapters, this one seems the most obscure, and it is difficult to decide if its emphasis is theoretical or meditative.

This chapter concludes with a stanza linking the *Sefer Yetzirah* to Abraham. It is this quote that serves as a source to the tradition that the book was authored by the Patriarch.

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## ENDNOTES

1. This is discussed at length in my *Meditation and Kabbalah*, and *Meditation and the Bible* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser).
2. *Kuzari* 4:27.
3. Barceloni, p. 100. This is in the British Museum, Ms. 600. See M. Marguliot, *Catalogue of Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. 2, p. 197. Also in the Vatican, Ms. 299, and the British Museum, Ms. 752. Another account also states that Rava and Ray Zeira gazed (*tzafah*) in the *Sefer Yetzirah* for three years (Barceloni, p. 268).
4. Thus, in a number of places in the text, the word *Tzar* is used instead of *Yatzar*. This is more easily read in the imperative than in the third person past.
5. *Sanhedrin* 67b, Barceloni, *loc. cit.* Also see *Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh Deah* 179:15, *Sifsey Cohen* 179:18; *Tshuvot Radbaz* 3:405.
6. Yehudah ben Nissim ibn Malka, *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* (Oxford, Ms. 1536), quoted in George Vajda, *Juda ben Nissim ibn Malka, philosophe juif marocain*, (Paris, 1954), p. 171; Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, (New York, 1969), p. 177. There is some question as to whether this Raziel is the same as the published edition. Abraham Abulafia also mentions having studied this book, see *Sheva Netivot HaChakhmah*, in A. Jellinek, *Philosophie und Kabbalah*, (Leipzig, 1854), p. 21.
7. A.M. Habermann, *Sinai* 10:3b (1974) with regard to Geniza fragment Taylor-Schechter 32:5. This is the Saadia Version, which is the longest.
8. Yisrael Weinstock, “LeBirur HaNusach shel Sefer Yetzirah,” *Temirin* 1:20, note 41, 1:16, note 31.
9. See *Ne'edar BaKodesh, Shaarey Tzion*.
10. Barceloni, p. 105. In the Pistoris translation, chapters five and six are combined, as well as in many manuscripts. See Weinstock, *loc. cit.*, note 33. The divisions in *Donash* and *Chakamoni* were put in by the printer, and do not exist in the original manuscripts.
11. Saadia Gaon, *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, translated into Hebrew by Yosef Kapach (Jerusalem, 1972), p. 34.
12. See Introduction to *Raziel; Shimushey Tehillim* in *Tshuvot Rashba* 413; R. Moshe Cordevero, *Commentary on Zohar Shir HaShirim* (Jerusalem, Ms. 4 74), in G. Scholem, *Kitvey Yad BaKabbalah*, p. 233-4.
13. See *Bahir*, Ed. Reuven Margolios (Jerusalem 1951), Nos. 95, 101, 106.

# SEPHER YETZIRAH

*The Long Version*  
*Translation from a Rosicrucian Manuscript*



## Chapter 1

**1-1.** By thirty-two mystical Paths has been established the Wisdom of YHVH Sabaoth, God of Israel, living Elohim, almighty God, high and supreme, living for all eternity. His name is holy. He created His universe by three measures (number, text, and commentary), ten sephiroth in the Void, and twenty-two fundamental letters.

**1-2.** The sephiroth are ten in number, like the ten fingers, five opposite five. They form the sole Covenant of the central Axis.

**1-3.** Ten sephiroth arose from the Void: ten and not nine, ten and not eleven. Discern them with Wisdom and Intelligence. Examine them, interrogate them. Make each thing correspond to their essence. Their number is ten and they are infinite.

**1-4.** Ten sephiroth arose from the Void: Restrain your heart so as not to think of them; restrain your mouth so as not to speak of them. And if your heart throbs, recall what is written: "And the Holy creatures ran and returned." Thus shall the Covenant be concluded.

**1-5.** Ten sephiroth arose from the Void: their end resides in their beginning and their beginning in their end, like a flame in a burning coal. Learn, meditate, and realize that God is unique, that the Creator has no peer. Facing the One, what is there to count?

**1-6.** Ten sephiroth arose from the Void: ten in number, they determine a depth of Beginning and a depth of End; a depth of Good and a depth of Evil; a depth of High and a depth of Low; a depth of East and

a depth of West, a depth of North and a depth of South. The sole God, the faithful King, rules over all from His holy dwelling, forever and ever.

**1-7.** Ten sephiroth arose from the Void; their appearance was like an endless flash of lightning. The Word of God travels through them constantly, and when He speaks such a whirlwind, they bow before His Throne.

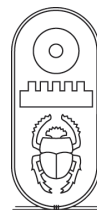
**1-8.** Ten sephiroth arose from the Void, as well as twenty-two fundamental letters: three Mothers, seven Doubles (Double Letters), and twelve Simples (Simple Letters), each containing the Breath of God.

**1-9.** Ten sephiroth arose from the Void by the Utterance of Elohim. His throne is eternally established. Blessed be His name, He who perpetually enlivens the worlds, forever and ever, with His Voice, Breath, and Word.

**1-10.** With the Wind coming from the Breath, God carved and sculpted the four directions of the Heavens: East and West, North and South. The Divine Breath is in each of them.

**1-11.** With the Waters coming from the Breath, God carved and sculpted the Chaos and Void from clay and mud. He traced them as a kind of garden and sculpted them like a wall. Chaos is a blue line which encircles the world. The void consists of spongy rocks, buried in the abyss from whence the Waters emanate.

**1-12.** With the Fire coming from the Waters, God carved and sculpted the Throne of



His glory, and confided it to the Seraphim, Ophanim, and Angels. Over these three angelic choirs He established his abode, thus it is written: "He has made His angels spirits, His ministers a flaming fire."

**1-13.** God chose three letters from among the Simples and set them in His great name: YHV. With it, He sealed the six directions. He turned toward the Height and sealed it with YHV. He turned toward the Depth and sealed it with YVH. He turned toward the Front and sealed the East with VYH. He turned toward the Rear and sealed the West with VHY. He turned toward the Right and sealed the South with YVH. He turned toward the Left and sealed the North with HVY.



## Chapter 2

**2-1.** Twenty-two fundamental letters (three Mothers, seven Doubles, and twelve Simples) have been engraved with the voice of God, carved with His Breath, and reunited in five places: Aleph, Heth, He, Ayin; Gimel, Yod, Kaph, Qoph; Daleth, Teth, Lamed, Nun, Tav; Zayin, Samekh, Shin, Resh, Tsade; Beth, Vav, Mem, and Pe.

Aleph, Heth, He, and Ayin are pronounced with the base of the tongue and the throat. Beth, Vav, Mem, and Pe are pronounced between the lips and with the tip of the tongue. Gimel, Yod, Kaph, and Qoph are pronounced with the back of the tongue. Daleth, Teth, Lamed, Nun, and Tav are pronounced with the tip of the tongue and the throat. Zayin, Samekh, Shin, Resh, and Tsade are pronounced between the teeth, with the tongue rounded and pushed toward the outside.

**2-2.** Twenty-two fundamental letters were joined together by God in a Circle of 231 Gates, a Circle which sways to and fro.

For nothing is superior in goodness than delight (oneg) and nothing is worse in evil than plague (nega).

**2-3.** Twenty-two fundamental letters were carved by God, sculpted, weighed, and combined. He changed them, formed with them the soul of everything which was formed and the soul of everything which will be formed.

**2-4.** God weighed and combined Aleph with all the letters and all with Aleph, Beth with all and all with Beth, and so on with each of them. Thus, all the letters arose from 231 Gates and emanated from one Name.

**2-5.** God formed the Primordial Substance from Chaos and extracted being from nonbeing. He hewed great Pillars from imperceptible Being.



## Chapter 3

**3-1.** The Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, and Shin, rest on the scale of merit and on the scale of duty, and the Word balances them.

**3-2.** The Three Mothers form a great, and mystical secret, hidden, and sealed by six rings. From them emanates fire, water, and air. They are also divided into male and female.

**3-3.** The Three Mothers formed in the universe air, water, and fire. The heavens were created from fire, Earth from water, and Breath from air which establishes the balance between the two.

**3-4.** The Three Mothers formed in the year heat, cold, and mildness. Heat was created from fire, cold from water, and mildness from the air, which establishes the balance between the two.

**3-5.** The Three Mothers formed in man the head, belly, and chest. The head was created from fire, the belly from water, and the chest from the air which establishes the balance between the two.

**3-6.** The Three Mothers carved, sculpted, and combined through God. And with them, He sealed the three Mothers in the Universe, three Mothers in the year, and three Mothers in humans, male and female.

**3-7.** God made the letter Aleph rule over the air, crowned it, exchanged it with others, and formed with it the air in the universe, moistness in the year, and the chest in humans, male and female.

God made the letter Mem rule over water, crowned it, exchanged it with the others, and formed with it Earth in the universe, coldness in the year, and the belly in humans, male and female.

God made the letter Shin rule over fire, crowned it, exchanged it with the others, and formed with it the heavens in the universe, heat in the year, and the head in humans, male and female.

**3-8.** With Aleph, God formed the breath, air, mildness, the chest, and language which establishes the balance. With Mem, He formed the waters, Earth, coldness, the belly, and the scale of merit. With Shin, He formed fire, the heavens, heat, the head, and the scale of duty.



## Chapter 4

**4-1.** The Seven Doubles rest on life, peace, wisdom, wealth, fecundity, beauty, and domination. They express themselves in a double sense, a structure soft and hard, strong and weak. The opposite of wisdom is folly, the opposite of wealth is poverty, the

opposite of fecundity is sterility, the opposite of life is death, the opposite of domination is dependence, the opposite of peace is war, the opposite of beauty is ugliness.

**4-2.** The Seven Doubles, not six, not eight, are similar to six sides and six directions, and the Holy Temple is in the center, supported by God.

**4-3.** God carved, sculpted, exchanged, weighed, and combined the seven double letters, and formed with them seven planets in the universe, seven days in the year, and seven gates in humans.

**4-4.** God made the letter Beth rule over wisdom, crowned it, exchanged it with the others, and formed with it Saturn in the universe, Shabbat in the year, and the mouth in humans, male and female.

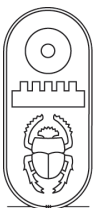
**4-5.** God made the letter Gimel rule over wealth, crowned it, exchanged it with the others, and formed with it Jupiter in the universe, the first day in the year, and the right eye in humans, male and female.

**4-6.** God made the letter Daleth rule over fecundity, crowned it, exchanged it with the others, and formed with it Mars in the universe, the second day in the year, and the left eye in humans, male and female.

**4-7.** God made the letter Kaph rule over life, crowned it, exchanged it with the others, and formed with it the Sun in the universe, the third day in the year, and the right nostril in humans, male and female.

**4-8.** God make the letter Pe rule over domination, crowned it, exchanged it with the others, and formed with it Venus in the universe, the fourth day in the year, and the left nostril in humans, male and female.

**4-9.** God made the letter Resh rule over peace, crowned it, exchanged it with the others, and formed with it Mercury in the



universe, the fifth day in the year, and the right ear in humans, male and female.

**4-10.** God made the letter Tav rule over beauty, crowned it, exchanged it with the others, and formed with it the Moon in the universe, the sixth day in the year, and the left ear in humans, male and female.

**4-11.** The seven planets of the universe are: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon. The seven days in the year are like the seven days of the week. The seven gates in humans, male and female, are the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and the mouth.

**4-12.** With Beth, God formed Saturn, Shabbat, the mouth, life and death. With Gimel, He formed Jupiter, the first day, the right eye, peace and war. With Daleth, He formed Mars, the second day, the left eye, wisdom and folly. With Kaph, He formed the Sun, the third day, the right nostril, wealth and poverty. With Pe, He formed Venus, the fourth day, the left nostril, fecundity and sterility. With Resh, He formed Mercury, the fifth day, the right ear, beauty and ugliness. With Tav, He formed the Moon, the sixth day, the left ear, domination and servitude.



## Chapter 5

**5-1.** The twelve Simples rest on seeing, hearing, smelling, speaking, tasting, coition, motion, anger, laughing, thinking, joy, and sleeping.

**5-2.** The twelve Simples, not eleven, not thirteen, form the twelve diagonal limits between the six directions; the upper limit of the East; the Northeast limit; the lower limit of the East; the upper limit of the South; the Southeast limit; the lower limit of the South; the upper limit of the West; the Southwest limit; the lower limit of the West; the upper limit of the North; the Northwest limit; and the lower limit of the North.

**5-3.** God carved, sculpted, combined, weighed, and conveyed the twelve simple letters, and He formed with them twelve constellations in the universe, twelve months in the year, and twelve organs in humans, male and female.

**5-4.** The Twelve Simples were distributed into three allies, three enemies, three animators, and three destroyers. The three allies are the heart, ears, and eyes. The three enemies are the liver, gall bladder, and tongue. The three animators are the two nostrils and spleen. The three destroyers are the two orifices and mouth. And God, the trusted King, rules over all of them from His holy dwelling for all of eternity.

**5-5.** God made the letter He rule over speaking, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Aries in the universe, the month of Nisan in the year, and the right foot in humans, male and female.

**5-6.** God made the letter Vav rule over thinking, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Taurus in the universe, the month of Iyar in the year, and the right kidney in humans, male and female.

**5-7.** God made the letter Zayin rule over motion, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Gemini in the universe, the month of Sivan in the year, and the left foot in humans, male and female.

**5-8.** God made the letter Heth rule over seeing, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Cancer in the universe, the month of Tamuz in the year, and the right hand in humans, male and female.

**5-9.** God made the letter Teth rule over hearing, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Leo in the universe, the month of Ab in the year, and the left kidney in humans, male and female.



**5-10.** God made the letter Yod rule over working, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Virgo in the universe, the month of Elul in the year, and the left hand in humans, male and female.

**5-11.** God made the letter Lamed rule over coition, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Libra in the universe, the month of Tishri in the year, and the gall bladder in humans, male and female.

**5-12.** God made the letter Nun rule over smell, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Scorpio in the universe, the month of Marcheshvan in the year, and the small intestine in humans, male and female.

**5-13.** God made the letter Samekh rule over sleeping, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Sagittarius in the universe, the month of Kislev in the year, and the stomach in humans, male and female.

**5-14.** God made the letter Ayin rule over anger, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Capricorn in the universe, the month of Teveth in the year, and the liver in humans, male and female.

**5-15.** God made the letter Tsade rule over tasting, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Aquarius in the universe, the month of Shevath in the year, and the esophagus in humans, male and female.

**5-16.** God made the letter Qoph rule over laughing, crowned it, combined it with each of the others, and formed with it Pisces in the universe, the month of Adar in the year, and spleen in man, male and female.

**5-17.** With He, God formed Aries, Nisan, the right foot, sight and blindness. With Vav, God formed Taurus, Iyar, the right kidney, hearing and deafness. With Zayin, God formed Gemini, Sivan, the left foot, smell and the absence of smell. With Heth, God formed Cancer, Tamuz, the right hand, speech and silence. With Teth, God formed Leo, Ab, the left kidney, taste and the absence of taste. With Yod, God formed Virgo, Elul, the left hand, action and inertia. With Lamed, God formed Libra, Tishri, the gall bladder, coition and sterility. With Nun, God formed Scorpio, Marcheshvan, the small intestine, motion and paralysis. With Samekh, God formed Sagittarius, Kislev, the stomach, serenity and anger. With Ayin, God formed Capricorn, Teveth, the liver, laughter and tears. With Tsade, God formed Aquarius, Shevath, the esophagus, intelligence and stupidity. With Qoph, God formed Pisces, Adar, the spleen, sleep and insomnia.



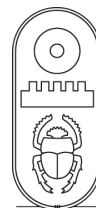
## Chapter 6

**6-1.** Three Mothers; seven Doubles; twelve Simples. These are the twenty-two letters by which Sabaoth, the God of Israel, Elohim living and supreme, living for eternity, whose Name is holy, formed All that was, is, and shall be.

**6-2.** There are twelve letters below, seven letters above, and three letters upon the seven. God established His dwelling above the three, but He has no second and governs alone in His universe, because He is One, and His name is One.

**6-3.** There are three Mothers and their offspring, seven subjects and their host, and twelve diagonal limits. The faithful witnesses of this are the universe, year, and humanity.

**6-4.** The sephiroth in the universe are ten and twelve: fire, air, water, seven planets,



and twelve constellations. The sephiroth in the year are ten and twelve: cold, hot, mild, seven days, and twelve months.

**6-5.** God set a rule of ten, three, seven, and twelve in the Tali, Cycle, and Heart. The Tali in the universe is like a ruler on the human throne, the Cycle in the year is like a ruler in his or her empire, and the Heart is like a ruler in war.

**6-6.** As a general rule, certain principles combine with others, are exchanged with others, and are opposed to others. If certain ones exist, others do not, and if some others exist, certain ones do not. But all are linked with the Tali, Cycle, and Heart.

**6-7.** God has made one correspond to the other, and the other to the one: good is opposed to evil, and evil is opposed to good. Good proceeds from good, and evil proceeds from evil. Good discerns evil, and evil discerns good. Good is preserved for the good, and evil is preserved for the evil.

**6-8.** When Abraham, our blessed father, came, he looked, lived, probed, understood, carved, sculpted, exchanged, formed, thought, and became fruitful. The Lord of All, may His name be blessed for eternity, revealed Himself to him, kissed him on the head, and called him: "Abraham, My beloved." He made a covenant with him and his descendants, and placed His glory on him. He made a pact between the ten fingers of his hands, attached the twenty-two letters on his tongue, and revealed to him their mystery. He plunged them into water, burned them by fire, tossed them about with the breath, inflamed them by the seven planets, and guided them toward the twelve constellations.

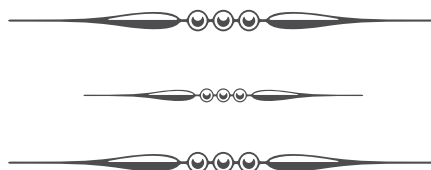
**6-9.** The three Mothers have for correspondences: heaven, fire, heat, and head. Air, breath, mild, and chest. Earth, water, cold, and belly.

**6-10.** The seven Doubles have for correspondences: Saturn, Shabbat, and mouth. Jupiter, first day, and right eye. Mars, second day, and left eye. Sun, third day, and right nostril. Venus, fourth day, and left nostril. Mercury, fifth day, and right ear. Moon, sixth day, and left ear.

**6-11.** The twelve Simples have for correspondences: Aries, Nisan, right foot, sight, and blindness. Taurus, Iyar, right kidney, hearing, and deafness. Gemini, Sivan, left foot, smell, and absence of smell. Cancer, Tamuz, right hand, speech, and silence. Leo, Ab, left kidney, taste, and absence of taste. Virgo, Elul, left hand, action, and inertia. Libra, Tishri, gall bladder, coition, and sterility. Scorpio, Marcheshvan, small intestine, motion, and paralysis. Sagittarius, Kislev, stomach, serenity, and anger. Capricorn, Teveth, liver, laughter, and tears. Aquarius, Shevath, esophagus, intelligence, and stupidity. Pisces, Adar, spleen, sleep, and insomnia.

**6-12.** The three enemies are the tongue, liver, and gall bladder. The three allies are the eyes, ears, and heart. The three animators are the teeth, nose, and spleen. The three destroyers are the two lower orifices and mouth.

**6-13.** Three things are good for the ear: a blessing, glad tidings, praise. Three things are bad for the eye: adultery, the evil eye, and a roving eye. Three things are good for the eye: humility, the appreciative eye, and true sight. Three things are bad for the tongue: defamation, denunciation, and hypocrisy. Three things are good for the tongue: silence, controlling the tongue, and truth.





# THE LEGEND OF THE LOST WORD

*Ralph M. Lewis, FRC*

*Ralph Maxwell Lewis served as the Emperor of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC for forty-eight years, from 1939 to 1987. In this article, he explores the power of the word, in various traditions, including Kabbalah.*



THE LEGEND of a Lost Word—of a key to creation by means of which all reality was set into motion—is thousands of years old. Part of the legend is allegorical, and part of it is due to a primitive conception of the efficacy of the spoken word as an energy by which humans are motivated. A similar power, therefore, is attributed to a First Cause, or deity. The first reference to a teleological or mental cause of creation and the relating of it to the spoken word goes back to the Memphite period of Egypt, about 4000 BCE. The chief Memphite deity was Ptah, who headed a pantheon of lesser deities. At first the priests of the Memphite mystery school proclaimed that Ptah was the patron god of the artisans and craftspeople of Egypt.

Centuries later the priests developed a more profound metaphysical conception with respect to Ptah. He then became the artisan, the creator of the universe. In their doctrines the priesthood then claimed that Ptah created the universe by thought. To be more explicit, the thoughts, the ideas of Ptah, were transformed into a spoken word by him, and by means of that word the thought was objectified, that is, became reality.

The following quotation is from an ancient inscription by the Ptah priesthood:

“It came to pass that heart and tongue gained power over every member, teaching that he [Ptah] was [in the form of the heart] in every heart and [in the form of the tongue] in every mouth, of all deities, all people, all cattle, or reptiles, [all] living, while he



Ralph Maxwell Lewis.

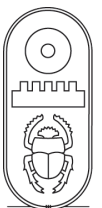
[Ptah] thinks and while he commands everything that he desires.”

The mouth of Ptah “which pronounced the names of all things....”

Egyptologists inform us that the ancient Egyptians used the word heart to mean mind or intelligence. Also, reference to the tongue alludes to the spoken word, the authoritative word by which all thoughts became objectified—made reality.

We can presume that somewhere in these ancient mysteries there were syllables, sounds, mantras which were thought to have special universal powers for the creation of worldly things.

We are, of course, familiar with the statement in the Bible, John I. “In the



beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Was this statement in the New Testament an echo of the doctrines of the Ptah priesthood of centuries before?

### **From the Kabbalah**

We now turn to the Kabbalah, or metaphysical doctrines of the Jews. The *Sepher Yezirah*, one of the chief books of the Kabbalah literally means “Book of Creation” or cosmogony. When the original of this book was written is not known. Hebrew scholars have established different periods for its origin. The exact time is lost in the shades of antiquity. However, a more or less general opinion holds that the book came into existence about the beginning the second or third century of the [Common] era.

The book teaches that the First Cause, “eternal and all-wise, almighty, is the origin and center of the whole universe.” From this First Cause all Being emanated. The book further relates that thought, speech, and action are an inseparable unity in the Divine Being. The Hebrew language and its characters correspond mostly to the things that they designate, and thus “holy thoughts, Hebrew language and its reduction to writing, form a unity which produces a creative effect.”

More simply put, the letters of the language, whether written or spoken, are elements of a potential power which brings into existence the very thing they represent. They are not symbols as in other languages, it was thought, but integral units of cosmic or divine energy.

### ***Sepher Yezirah***

It is frequently observed by Jewish and Christian theologians that the Marcionite Gnostic system as well as that of Clementines of the second century contain many analogies and parallels to the *Sepher Yezirah*.

Let us quote a few examples from the *Sepher Yezirah*. In Chapter 1, Section 8, we find, “The spirit of the living God, praised and glorified be the name of Him who lives to all eternity. The articulate word of creative power, the spirit and the word are what we call the holy spirit.”

Then in Chapter II, Section 6: “He created a reality out of nothing, called the nonentity into existence and hewed, as it were, colossal pillars from intangible air....He predetermined, and by speaking created every creature and every word by one name. For an illustration may serve the twenty-two elementary substances by the primitive substance of Aleph.”

### **Powerful Mantras**

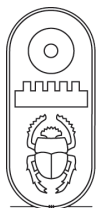
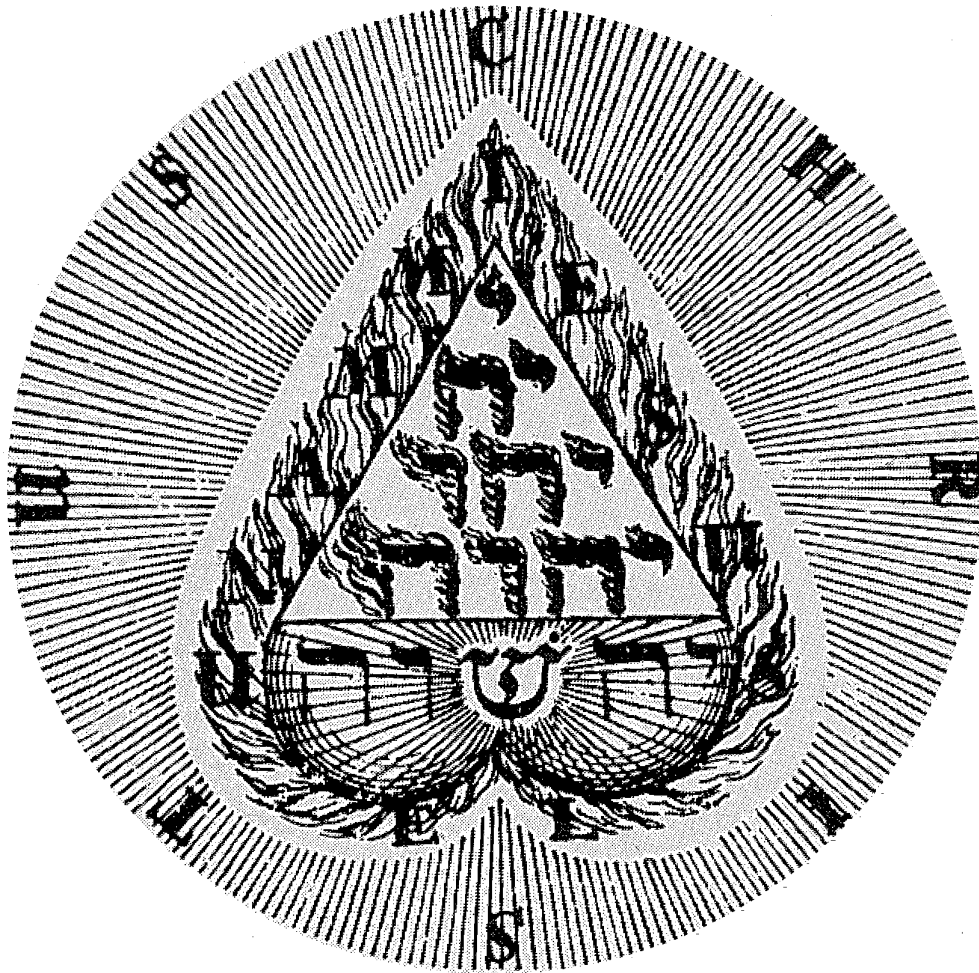
The Hindu mantras consisting of combinations of vowel intonations are attributed specific powers in affecting the human emotions and stimulating the psychic centers, and even in having certain therapeutic value. Of course, as Rosicrucians, we know that the vibrations of the human voice in specific combinations of vowels can induce psychical conditions of an exhilarating nature in a person.

With most early cultures, the deities were thought to be anthropomorphic. They were, therefore, conceived to have humanlike qualities. If the deities created, they would use similar functions and attributes to those of humans. In other words, they would think and plan, but how would they objectify their ideas? What would cause it to have reality? Simply, how would thoughts become things? The vocal command carries force, the voice can be heard, it can be felt, and it may move persons to act, to bring about material things that will conform to the idea behind the spoken word. Consequently, it was an easy matter to assume that the deities, in creating, did likewise, that their voice was the medium to convert the idea into a thing.

In the traditions of the various cultures there was believed to be a fiat, a Word that had the vibratory efficacy to have originally brought the Cosmos into existence. It was further held that this word had been known to humankind but, somehow, in the vicissitudes of time and in the degradation of humanity it became lost. Mystically and factually certain words, when uttered, are most beneficial to be heard as sounds. Primitive people learned of the value of these sounds in their exclamations and cries of pain, pleasure, surprise, anger, and so on. In the ancient mystery schools certain intonations of mantras were used to prepare the initiate to attain the proper

state of consciousness and response to the occasion.

We can hold to the view in our modern world that a single word uttered did not create all of reality out of nonentity. However, we do hold to the cosmological concept that the basic or primary reality is a vibratory energy. It is a spectrum or scale of energy out of which all things manifest. Our interpretations of the sensations and the realization we have of such vibratory energy are not exact archetypes of it. In other words, we do not experience directly absolute reality but only those effects which they have on our consciousness.



# THREE KABBALISTIC MEDITATIONS FROM THE *SEPHER YETZIRAH*

Julie Scott, SRC

In this article, Grand Master Julie Scott presents three Kabbalistic meditations, using techniques from the *Sepher Yetzirah*.



According to the Rosicrucian teachings, the *Sepher Yetzirah*, the oldest of all Kabbalistic texts, is a meditation manual. Dr. Isidor Kalisch, translator of the *Sepher Yetzirah* edition published by the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC,<sup>1</sup> describes it as a metaphysical essay. Aryeh Kaplan writes, “What we therefore have in *Sefer Yetzirah* appears to be an instructional manual, describing certain meditative exercises.”<sup>2</sup>

Some of the meditation techniques in the *Sepher Yetzirah* include combining the Hebrew letters in chants, gazing upon their form, and creating images of the letters in our minds and with our hands.

We will experiment with these techniques below.

## The Hebrew Letters

The twenty-two Hebrew letters are believed to contain or exude the essential energy of what they represent. For example, Mem represents water and the essence or character of water. Dalet represents a door and the essential energy or power of a door. The purpose of certain Kabbalistic meditations is to manifest or activate the associated essential energy or power, within us and around us.

Also, the shape of each letter has significance and can speak to us on a more than intellectual level. Many Kabbalistic meditations include working with the shapes of the Hebrew letters.

Each Hebrew letter functions as a numeral as well as a letter. Alef is a letter and also the number one, Bet is a letter

and the number two, etc. When letters are combined to form a word, then each word has a numerical value too, based on the total of the numeral letters in that word.

A list with each Hebrew Letter, its Name, Meaning or essence/essential energy, and Number is presented in Chart No. 1.

**Chart No. 1. Hebrew Alphabet.**

Letter	Name	Meaning	Number
א	Alef	Ox	1
ב	Bet	House	2
ג	Gimel	Camel	3
ד	Dalet	Door	4
ה	Hay	Window	5
ו	Vav	Hook	6
ז	Zayin	Weapon	7
ח	Chet	Fence	8
ט	Tet	Snake	9
י	Yud	Hand	10
כ	Kaf	Palm of Hand	20
ל	Lamed	Ox Goad	30
מ	Mem	Water	40
נ	Nun	Fish	50
ס	Samekh	Prop	60
ע	Ayin	Eye	70
פ	Pay	Mouth	80
צ	Tzaddi	Fish Hook	90
ק	Kuf	Back of Head	100
ר	Resh	Head	200
ש	Shin	Tooth	300
ת	Tav	Cross	400



## Combining the Hebrew letters

### The 231 Gates Meditation

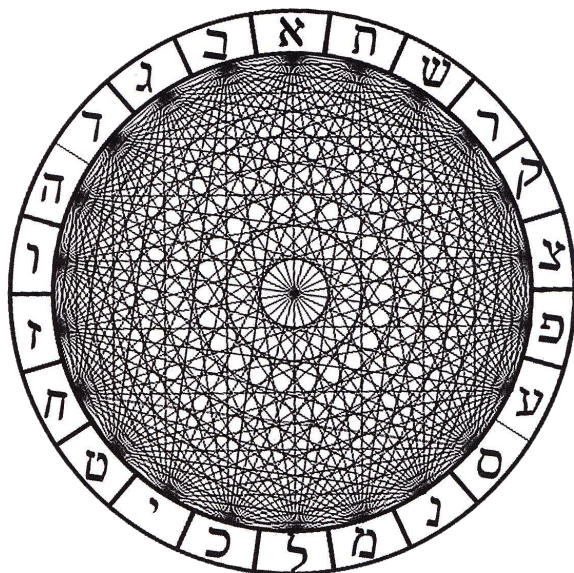
When we combine each of the twenty-two Hebrew letters with all the rest (for example, Alef Bet, Alef Gimel, Alef Dalet, etc.) we create the 231 Gates.

From the *Sepher Yetzirah*:

2:2 “Twenty-two fundamental letters were joined together by God in a Circle of 231 Gates, a Circle which sways to and fro.”

2:4 “God weighed and combined Alef with all the letters and all with Alef, Bet with all and all with Bet, and so on with each of them. Thus, all the letters arose from 231 Gates and emanated from one Name.”

Sometimes the 231 Gates are illustrated in the mandala below. If we place the Hebrew letters at equal points around a circle and connect each letter with every other letter, the lines connecting them create this design.



The 231 Gates.

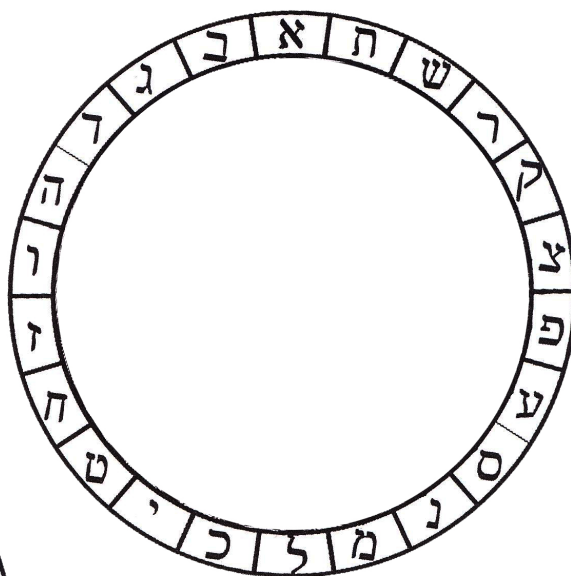
You will find a recording of the 231 Gates meditation online at <http://www.rosicrucian.org/publications/>.

To make it easy to follow along with this meditation, we have created Chart No. 2, which shows the letter combinations with the Hebrew letters written in English. For ease of reading, this chart is written

from left to right, although Hebrew is read from right to left. We have also included a pronunciation guide – Chart No. 3.

While listening to the recording of the 231 Gates meditation, chant along or just gaze upon the letters – each letter individually, as they are combined, or around the spherical mandala as they are spoken. Or chant them on your own.

You may also choose to draw the lines on the blank sphere below connecting each letter with the others, either in silence or while they are being chanted.



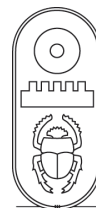
Allow plenty of time and privacy for this meditation.

While doing this open yourself to any impressions you may receive.

### Creating images of the Hebrew letters – in our minds

Intense focus and visualization are important aspects of many meditation practices, including the Rosicrucian techniques of concentration and contemplation, and many Kabbalistic exercises.

The *Sepher Yetzirah* provides instructions on how to deeply focus and visualize the Hebrew letters, thus attuning with their power or energy.



# THE 231 GATES

Read down each double column (pairs of letters), starting at the left.

Alef Bet  
Alef Gimel Bet Gimel  
Alef Dalet Bet Dalet Gimel Dalet  
Alef Hay Bet Hay Gimel Hay Dalet Hay  
Alef Vav Bet Vav Gimel Vav Dalet Vav Hay Vav  
Alef Zayin Bet Zayin Gimel Zayin Dalet Zayin Hay Zayin Vav Zayin  
Alef Chet Bet Chet Gimel Chet Dalet Chet Hay Chet Vav Chet Zayin Chet  
Alef Tet Bet Tet Gimel Tet Dalet Tet Hay Tet Vav Tet Zayin Tet Chet Tet  
Alef Yud Bet Yud Gimel Yud Dalet Yud Hay Yud Vav Yud Zayin Yud Chet Yud Tet Yud  
Alef Kaf Bet Kaf Gimel Kaf Dalet Kaf Hay Kaf Vav Kaf Zayin Kaf Chet Kaf Tet Kaf Yud Kaf  
Alef Lamed Bet Lamed Gimel Lamed Dalet Lamed Hay Lamed Vav Lamed Zayin Lamed Chet Lamed Tet Lamed Yud Lamed  
Alef Mem Bet Mem Gimel Mem Dalet Mem Hay Mem Vav Mem Zayin Mem Chet Mem Tet Mem Yud Mem  
Alef Nun Bet Nun Gimel Nun Dalet Nun Hay Nun Vav Nun Zayin Nun Chet Nun Tet Nun Yud Nun  
Alef Samekh Bet Samekh Gimel Samekh Dalet Samekh Hay Samekh Vav Samekh Zayin Samekh Chet Samekh Tet Samekh Yud Samekh  
Alef Ayin Bet Ayin Gimel Ayin Dalet Ayin Hay Ayin Vav Ayin Zayin Ayin Chet Ayin Tet Ayin Yud Ayin  
Alef Pay Bet Pay Gimel Pay Dalet Pay Hay Pay Vav Pay Zayin Pay Chet Pay Tet Pay Yud Pay  
Alef Tzaddi Bet Tzaddi Gimel Tzaddi Dalet Tzaddi Hay Tzaddi Vav Tzaddi Zayin Tzaddi Chet Tzaddi Tet Tzaddi Yud Tzaddi  
Alef Kuf Bet Kuf Gimel Kuf Dalet Kuf Hay Kuf Vav Kuf Zayin Kuf Chet Kuf Tet Kuf Yud Kuf  
Alef Resh Bet Resh Gimel Resh Dalet Resh Hay Resh Vav Resh Zayin Resh Chet Resh Tet Resh Yud Resh  
Alef Shin Bet Shin Gimel Shin Dalet Shin Hay Shin Vav Shin Zayin Shin Chet Shin Tet Shin Yud Shin  
Alef Tav Bet Tav Gimel Tav Dalet Tav Hay Tav Vav Tav Zayin Tav Chet Tav Tet Tav Yud Tav

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## Chart No. 2.

Kaf Lamed

Kaf Mem Lamed Mem

Kaf Nun Lamed Nun Mem Nun

Kaf Samekh Lamed Samekh Mem Samekh Nun Samekh

Kaf Ayin Lamed Ayin Mem Ayin Nun Ayin Samekh Ayin

Kaf Pay Lamed Pay Mem Pay Nun Pay Samekh Pay Ayin Pay

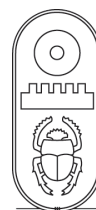
Kaf Tzaddi Lamed Tzaddi Mem Tzaddi Nun Tzaddi Samekh Tzaddi Ayin Tzaddi Pay Tzaddi

Kaf Kuf Lamed Kuf Mem Kuf Nun Kuf Samekh Kuf Ayin Kuf Pay Kuf Tzaddi Kuf

Kaf Resh Lamed Resh Mem Resh Nun Resh Samekh Resh Ayin Resh Pay Resh Tzaddi Resh Kuf Resh

Kaf Shin Lamed Shin Mem Shin Nun Shin Samekh Shin Ayin Shin Pay Shin Tzaddi Shin Kuf Shin Resh Shin

Kaf Tav Lamed Tav Mem Tav Nun Tav Samekh Tav Ayin Tav Pay Tav Tzaddi Tav Kuf Tav Resh Tav Shin Tav





2:3 “Twenty-two fundamental letters were carved by God, sculpted, weighed, and combined.”

This technique engraves the letters in our minds, then carves them – filling our entire consciousness.

Chart No. 4 (on page 26) shows each of the twenty-two Hebrew letters. Choose one and focus on its shape. Close your eyes and see it clearly in your mind’s eye.

See the letter carved out or ablaze with color and life against a contrasting background. Then see the background carved out or ablaze with color and life behind the empty image. Now choose another letter and do the same thing.

While doing this open yourself to any impressions you may receive.

### Creating images of the Hebrew letters – with our hands

After doing the exercise above mentally, take color pencils or pens and do the same thing on the pages of this magazine (or make copies) – engrave, carve, permute, weigh, and transform the letters so that they fill your entire consciousness.

While doing this open yourself to any impressions you may receive.

Now bring the letters to life by creating a three dimensional work of art.

First choose one of the Hebrew letters and become thoroughly familiar with its corresponding numerical value, essence, pronunciation, and form. Various charts with this information are presented in this magazine for your reference.

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#### Chart No. 3. Pronunciation Guide for Hebrew Letters.

א	Alef	AH-lef	ל	Lamed	LAH-med
ב	Bet	BET	מ	Mem	MEM
ג	Gimel	GIH-mel	נ	Nun*	NUN*
ד	Dalet	DAH-let	ס	Samekh*	SAH-mekh*
ה	Hay	HAY	ע	Ayin	AH-yin
ו	Vav	VAHV	פ	Pay	PAY
ז	Zayin	ZAH-yin	צ	Tzaddi	TSAH-dee
ח	Chet*	CHET*	ק	Kuf*	KUF*
ט	Tet	TET	ר	Resh	RAYSH
י	Yud*	YUD*	ש	Shin	SHIN
כ	Kaf	KAHF	ת	Tav	TAHV

\*Note: “ch” and “kh” to be pronounced as the German “Bach” and the Scottish “loch.” “U” to be pronounced as the “oo” in “book” and “look.”

Then create a work of art based on your experience of this letter. Allow time for this creation to manifest. Make it as three dimensional as possible. Stand it up, hollow it out, carve it, engrave it, and add other qualities such as sound or smell.

While doing this open yourself to any impressions you may receive.

After you have completed this work of art, deconstruct it within twenty-two days of completion, returning as many of its parts back to nature as possible.

The Rosicrucian and Martinist teachings include many Kabbalistic lessons, meditations, and exercises. In fact, Kabbalah is one of the most important sources contributing to the Rosicrucian teachings and even more so to the Martinist teachings.

If you have found these meditations interesting, then you may find the Rosicrucian and Martinist lessons dealing with Kabbalah especially inspiring and beneficial.

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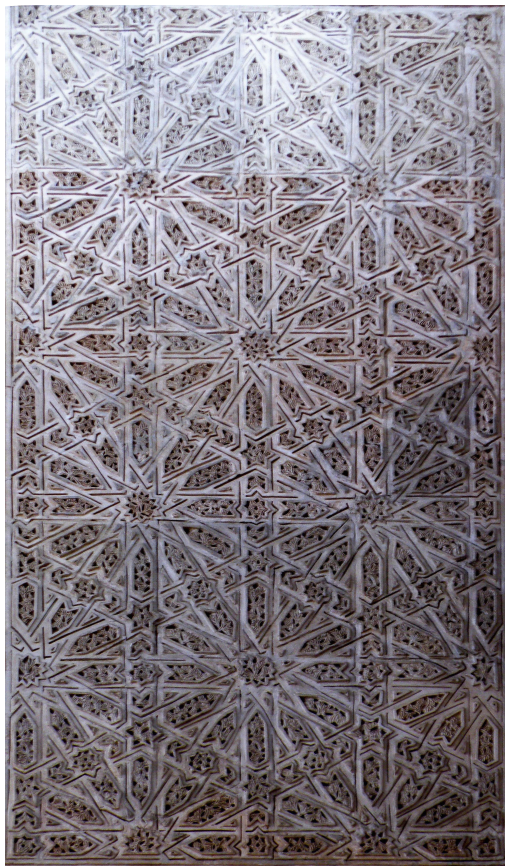
Author's Note: Many thanks to Lloyd Abrams, Ph.D., FRC for creating the original charts for this article and for serving as a most helpful advisor for this issue of the *Rosicrucian Digest*.

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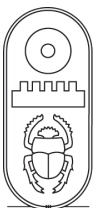
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## ENDNOTES

1. Isidor Kalisch, *Sepher Yetzirah, A Book on Creation*, (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 2002).
  2. Aryeh Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation*, (Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA: Red Wheel/Weiser, 1997).
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Ten Sephirot on the Cordoba Synagogue's east wall. Spain. Photo Roy Lindman.



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# THE HEBREW ALPHABET

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# MASCULINE AND FEMININE SYMBOLISM IN KABBALAH<sup>1</sup>

Lloyd Abrams, Ph.D., FRC

Lloyd Abrams, Ph.D., FRC, serves on the Editorial Board of the Rose+Croix Journal ([www.rosecroixjournal.org](http://www.rosecroixjournal.org)) and is an instructor for Rose Croix University International. He has presented many programs and workshops on Kabbalah. In this article, he explains many of the core Kabbalistic concepts and relates them to masculine and feminine symbolism in Kabbalah.



When dealing with intangible spiritual or metaphysical concepts, it is helpful to make use of symbols and metaphors derived from familiar everyday experience. Kabbalah has been described as “an alphabet of symbols in which a spiritual language is constructed.”<sup>2</sup> Two important symbolic terms in Kabbalah are “masculine” and “feminine.” While not specifically denoting men and women, Kabbalistic symbolism draws upon some aspects of these terms to communicate by analogy certain characteristics of spiritual concepts and processes.

In Kabbalistic tradition, especially in the Zohar and the teachings of Isaac Luria (1534-1572), while the essential nature of Divinity is neither masculine nor feminine, some of the ways in which the Deity manifests and relates to the world are differentiated from one another by being conceptualized symbolically as either masculine or feminine. In addition, the processes which create and sustain the universe are understood in symbolic terms drawn by analogy from human reproduction.

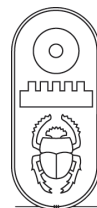
Kabbalah makes a distinction between the essential nature of Divinity and its various emanations and manifestations. The essential nature and highest aspect of the Divine is *Ain Sof*, which means infinite, limitless or unbounded. *Ain Sof* transcends all categories of thought. It is an unknowable, formless and infinite

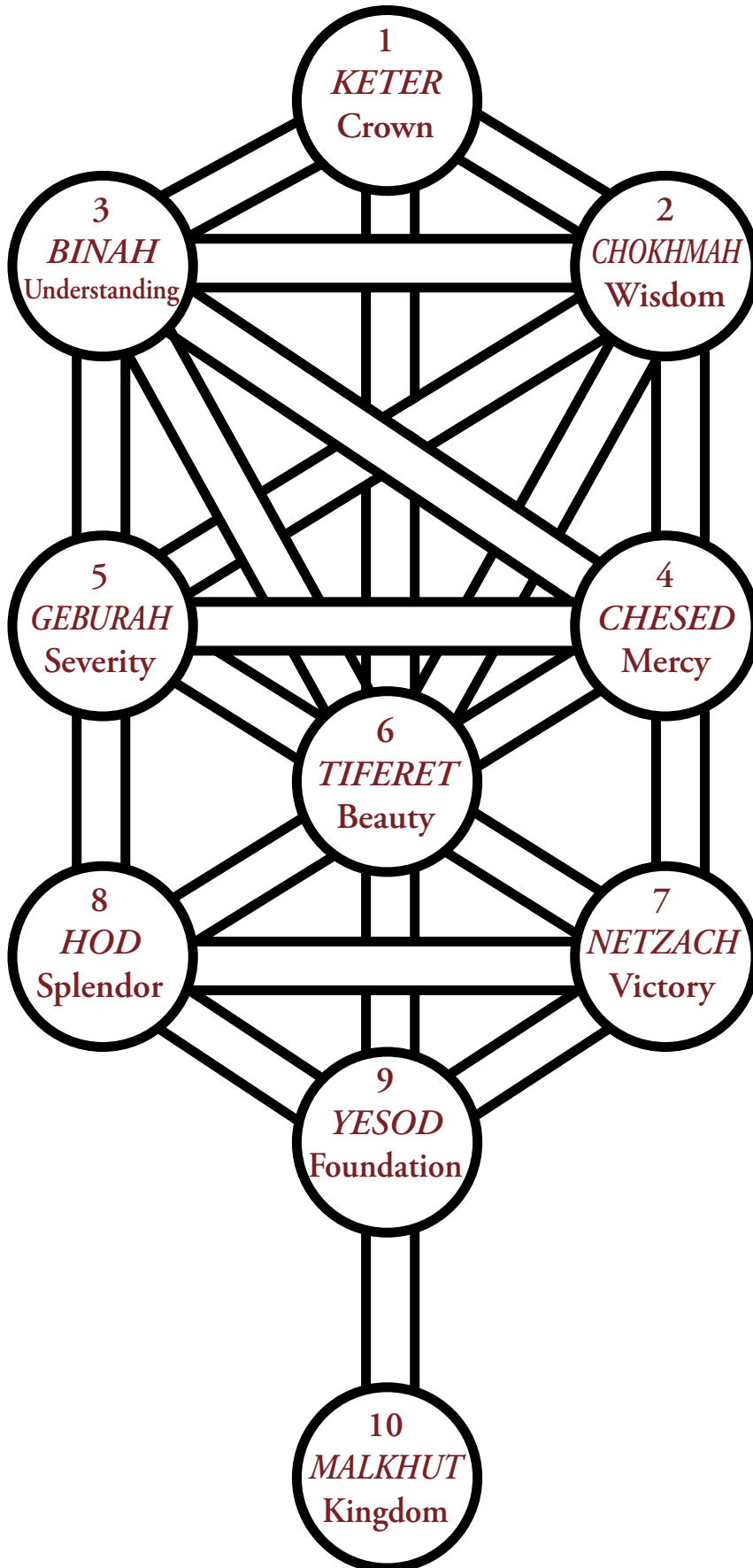
unity—neither masculine nor feminine. While *Ain Sof* is absolute unity, the world is characterized by duality, pairs of opposites, polarities. The archetypal symbol for this in Kabbalah is the masculine and feminine. It is the archetype of contrasts or pairs of opposites. Human gender is only one concrete manifestation of this more general concept.

## The Sefirot

*Ain Sof* creates and sustains the world by emanating the Infinite Light (*Ain Sof Or*), which flows downward giving rise to a series of ten *Sefirot*. Each *Sefirah* is a different attribute or function of Divinity as it manifests at each successive level.

In Kabbalah, the masculine-feminine polarity relates to the direction of this flow, giving and receiving. Specifically, it relates to giving and receiving Divine Light. This symbolism is based on the process of procreation. The father gives his seed to the mother. The mother receives the seed into the womb, where it takes on the form of the new creature. Giving is thus associated with the masculine and receiving is associated with the feminine. In one sense, then, each *Sefirah* can be seen as both feminine and masculine—feminine in relation to the preceding *Sefirah*, from which it receives the Light, and masculine relative to the next lower *Sefirah*, to which it gives the Light.<sup>3</sup> In general, however, each *Sefirah* is identified as either masculine or feminine.





The 10 *Sefirot*



The father's seed is without form, undifferentiated. It is in the womb of the mother that the embryo takes on form and differentiates into various organs and limbs. Formlessness is therefore associated with the masculine, and Form is associated with the feminine.

As the Infinite Light flows downward from *Ain Sof*, the *Sefirot* serve as vessels to receive and hold the Light. At each successive level of emanation, the vessels become more and more "dense" and the Light is more and more veiled, eventually culminating in our material world. Light tends to expand infinitely in all directions, while vessels contain and restrict things within boundaries. Therefore, the masculine is associated with expansiveness while the feminine is associated with restriction.

In Kabbalistic terminology, all of these pairs of opposites or complimentary concepts are symbolized by the archetype of the masculine and the feminine: giving and receiving, formlessness and form, light and vessel, expansiveness and restriction.

### The *Partzufim*

*Partzufim* (faces) are anthropomorphic representations of different aspects of Deity. They are personifications of the functions of the *Sefirot*. Isaac Luria drew upon terms and concepts from the Zohar and constructed an elaborate system of *Partzufim* to describe in detail how the *Sefirot* relate to each other and to our world.<sup>4</sup>

The *Partzuf* of the first *Sefirah*, *Keter*, is called *Arikh Anpin*, translated as the Long Face or Large Face. Christian and Hermetic Kabbalah often use the Latin translation of this term, *Macroprosopus*. *Keter* is also personified as *Atika Kadisha* (the Holy Ancient One) and as *Atik Yomin* (the Ancient of Days).

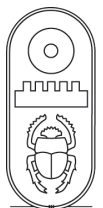
The second *Partzuf*, associated with the *Sefirah Chokhmah* (Wisdom), is

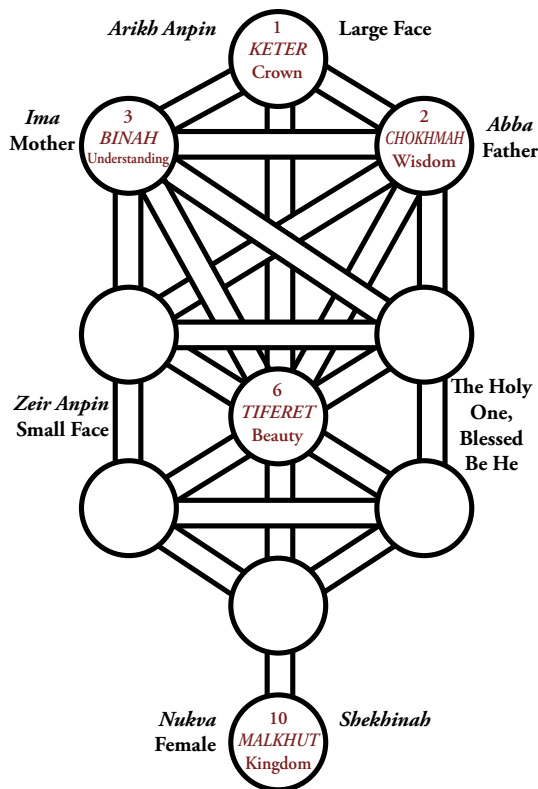


*The Ancient of Days* by William Blake.

*Abba* (Father). The *Partzuf* of *Binah* (Understanding) is *Ima* (Mother). It is said that *Chokhmah* impregnates *Binah* with the Light, and *Binah* then gives birth to all the lower *Sefirot*. *Abba* and *Ima* personify this idea. It is the metaphorical sexual union between *Abba* and *Ima*, Father and Mother, that generates the downward flow of Light that gives birth to the seven lower *Sefirot*.<sup>5</sup>

The next *Partzuf* is *Zeir Anpin* (Small Face, *Microprosopus*). The term "Small Face" is in contrast to the "Large Face" of *Keter*. In a way, *Zeir Anpin* is a lower counterpart or reflection of *Arikh Anpin*. *Zeir Anpin* consists of the next six *Sefirot*: *Chesed* (Mercy), *Geburah* (Severity), *Tiferet* (Beauty), *Netzach* (Victory), *Hod* (Splendor), and *Yesod* (Foundation). These six *Sefirot* have been associated with the six days of Creation described in the first chapter of Genesis. This is consistent with the metaphor of the sexual union of *Abba* (*Chokhmah*) and *Ima* (*Binah*) as the creative act giving rise to everything below them.





The 5 Partzufim

Although it consists of all six of these *Sefirot*, *Zeir Anpin* is usually represented by the single *Sefirah*, *Tiferet*.<sup>6</sup> The union of *Abba* (Father) and *Ima* (Mother) gives rise to *Zeir Anpin*, so *Zeir Anpin* (*Tiferet*) is also called “The Son.” It is also referred to as “The Holy One, blessed be He.”

The *Partzuf* of the tenth *Sefirah*, *Malkhut* (Kingdom), is *Nukva*, “The Female.” *Nukva* is also referred to as the Bride of *Zeir Anpin*, who is the Bridegroom or the Spouse. As *Malkhut* is the aspect of Deity that dwells within the material world, it is also called the *Shekhinah* (from the Hebrew root meaning “to dwell”), “The Divine Presence.”

So there are two male-female pairs of *Partzufim*: *Abba* and *Ima*, Father and Mother, whose coupling emanates the lower *Sefirot*, and *Zeir Anpin* and *Nukva*, the Son and His Bride, whose coupling causes the Divine Light and its blessings to flow into our world.

In the imagery of the Zohar, the union of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut* also gives birth to

human souls, which descend to join with the physical bodies produced by the union of the earthly husband and wife.

When *Shekhinah* unites with Her partner, *Tiferet*, souls issue from the gushing river of *Yesod*. Stimulated by Her passion from below, the stream of souls flows into Her.<sup>7</sup>

“And a river went forth from Eden to water the Garden.” [Genesis 2:10] From the union of the male and female—meaning, of course, in the transcendence—come all souls which animate men. The inference is that the Eden-river is that of life, or synonymously it is the river of souls, and in this case we shall understand that the Higher Eden is the place of Divine Nuptials, while the Garden which was watered by the river was the place of nuptials below. . . At the moment of the union of the Spouse and Bride all souls came forth from the celestial river.<sup>8</sup>

### The Holy One and His *Shekhinah*

In this system, the relationship between *Tiferet* and *Malkhut* crucially affects the state of our world. When the Holy One, blessed be He, and the *Shekhinah* join together in sexual union, this increases the flow of Divine Light and blessings into our world. But when they turn away from each other, the flow of Light and blessings diminishes, and the influence of evil gains strength in the world. Human actions can affect the actions of these *Partzufim* (as below, so above). Sinful behavior causes the Holy One and the *Shekhinah* to turn away from each other. They can be induced to turn toward each other and join together when we live in accordance with the Divine Will by fulfilling the commandments. (There are a total of 613 commandments in the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.)



<i>SEFIRAH</i>	<i>PARTZUF</i>	OTHER NAMES	DIVINE NAME
<i>Keter</i> Crown	<i>Arikh Anpin</i> Large Face	<i>Atika Kadisha, Atik Yomin</i> Holy Ancient One, Ancient of Days	<i>Ehyeh</i>
<i>Chokhmah</i> Wisdom	<i>Abba</i> Father		<i>Yah</i>
<i>Binah</i> Understanding	<i>Ima</i> Mother		<i>Elohim</i>
<i>Tiferet</i> Beauty	<i>Zeir Anpin</i> Small Face	<i>Kudsha Berikh Hu</i> , Son, Spouse The Holy One blessed be He	YHVH
<i>Malkhut</i> Kingdom	<i>Nukva</i> The Female	<i>Shekhinah</i> , Bride The Divine Presence	<i>Adonai</i>

Table No. 1: Name Correspondences.

The world as first created was a true Garden of Eden because the blessed Holy One and *Shekhinah* were “face to face,” joined in constant embrace like that of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*. Divine blessing thus coursed through the system without interruption, flowing through all of *Shekhinah’s* “hosts” and “palaces” into an idealized lower world as well. Only Adam and Eve’s sin . . . disturbed this initial harmony. Since the expulsion from Eden, the union of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, or Blessed Holy One and *Shekhinah*, has been sporadic rather than constant, dependent upon the balance of human virtue and transgression.<sup>9</sup>

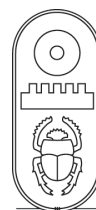
The harmonious relation between *Tifereth* and *Malkhut*, or, as this relation was more commonly called, “*Yibud Kudsha Berikh Hu u-Shekhinte’*” (the unification of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Divine Presence), is crucial for the welfare of the world. Only when the union between the two divine powers is achieved can the influx stemming from the *Eyn Sof* (the infinite one) be transmitted to the lower world. This harmony, which was disturbed by the primordial sin, as well

as by sins in general, can be restored by the kabbalistic performance of the commandments.<sup>10</sup>

He and they (the Kabbalists in particular) share in the task of restoring cosmic oneness, of bringing divine male and female face to face with one another so that the lights might shine throughout the universe, so that the waters of life might flow through Her to nourish and sustain all the worlds below.<sup>11</sup>

“The uniting of the blessed Holy One and His *Shekhinah*” became for the Castilian Kabbalists the overwhelming goal of the religious life, and virtually all of the commandments were viewed as part of this effort.<sup>12</sup>

For the Kabbalist, it is not sufficient to perform the commandments in a casual or automatic way. One has to have the proper *Kavanah*, that is, the proper mental intention and focused mind in order to have an effect upon the upper realm. Prior to performing a commandment, in order to achieve the necessary conscious intention and focus, the Kabbalist recites a formula that begins: “For the sake of unification between The Holy Blessed One and His Shechinah . . .”<sup>13</sup>



Another way to induce the Holy One and the *Shekhinah* to join together is for a husband and wife to engage in sexual relations in a manner consistent with the commandments and with the proper theurgical intention (*Kavanah*). The husband identifies with the Holy One, blessed be He, and the wife embodies the *Shekhinah*, the feminine Divine Presence in the world.

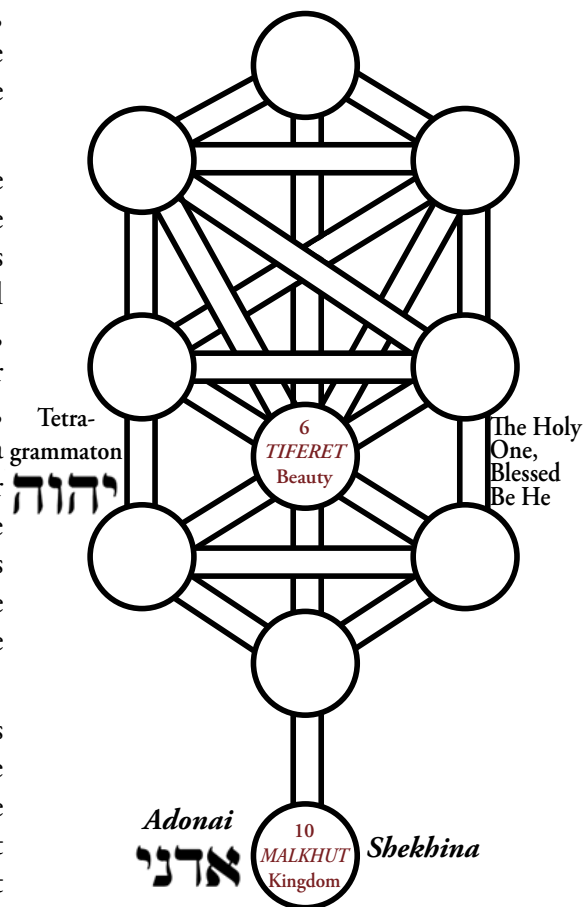
The human pair performing the sexual union is able to induce a state of harmony above. The sexual act is conceived as fraught with theurgical powers. With most of the kabbalists, this human act both reflects the higher structure and influences it. Therefore, marriage and sexual union have a tremendous impact on the upper worlds. . . Marriage and sex were transformed into a mystery that reflects a mysterious marriage above, whose success is crucial for both the divine cosmos and the lower universe.<sup>14</sup>

The Zohar contains glorious descriptions of the correspondence between the upper union and the lower union, assuring the reader that his coupling with his wife, carried out within the proper halakhic rules and bounded as well by mystical intention, is potentially a holy and cosmos-redeeming act, one that unites the *sefirot* and draws a holy soul to come into this world.<sup>15</sup>

### Uniting Divine Names


Each of the ten *Sefirot* symbolizes the manifestation of Divinity on a different level in the sequence of emanations, and each *Sefirah* carries a different Divine Name. The Divine Name associated with *Tiferet* is the Tetragrammaton, composed of the four Hebrew letters *Yud Hay Vav Hay* (usually rendered in English as YHVH). The Divine Name associated with *Malkhut* is *Adonai*, composed of


the four Hebrew letters *Alef Dalet Nun Yud* (ADNY). Uniting these two Divine Names with properly focused intention (*Kavanah*) theurgically unites *Tiferet* with *Malkhut*, the Holy One blessed be He with the *Shekhinah*.




One way to unite the names YHVH and *Adonai* is to unite (add together) their numerical values. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is also a number, and each word has a number value equal to the sum of its letters. In the Kabbalistic system of Gematria, any two words or phrases that have the same number value share a deep connection, and are in some way equivalent. The numerical value of YHVH is 26, and the numerical value of *Adonai* is 65. Uniting these two names yields the sum of 91. The letters of the Hebrew word *Amen* (*Alef Mem Nun*) also add up to 91. Being aware of this numerical equivalence, whenever one says “Amen” at the end of a prayer or blessing using the

proper *Kavanah*/intention, one is mentally uniting the Divine Names YHVH and *Adonai*, and theurgically uniting the Holy One and His *Shekhinah*.

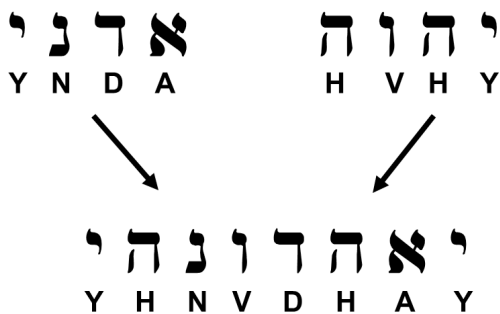

 = Tetragrammaton  
 5 6 5 10 = 26


 = Adonai  
 10 50 4 1 = 65


 = Amen  
 50 40 1 = 91

Another way to unite the names YHVH and *Adonai* is to combine their letters into a single eight-letter name. This is done by taking one letter at a time alternately from each name until all eight letters have been interleaved into a single new name that symbolically unites *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*. When saying “Amen” with the proper intention at the end of a prayer or blessing, the combined eight-letter name can be internally visualized and mentally intoned, thereby theurgically inducing the unification of the Holy One and the *Shekhinah*.

There are two forms of this eight-letter name. For blessings, which descend from above, alternate letters are taken first from YHVH and then from *Adonai*. For the *Kadish* prayer, which sends praise upward from below, letters are taken first from *Adonai* and then from YHVH.



Amen for Blessings.  
(Hebrew is written from right to left.)

## The Pentagrammaton

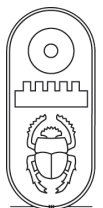
In Christian Kabbalah, the Hebrew letter *Shin* is inserted into the middle of the Tetragrammaton (YHVH) to produce a five-letter name (*Yud Hay Shin Vav Hay*), which is a variant spelling of Jesus’ Hebrew name, *Yeshua* (alternatively pronounced *Yeheshua* or *Yehoshua*). This five-letter name is called the Pentagrammaton, and it is considered to be Jesus’ secret name, the “wonder-working word.”<sup>16</sup>

*Shin* is the first letter of the Hebrew word *Shekhinah* and could therefore be used to symbolically represent the *Shekhinah*. The shape of the letter *Shin* also resembles an altar with three lit candles, the Rosicrucian symbol for the Divine Presence, which is also called “the Shekinah.” Combining *Shin* with YHVH to form the Kabbalistic name of Jesus (YHShVH) could therefore be seen as another way to represent the unification of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, the Holy One and His *Shekhinah*, the transcendent Deity and the Divine Presence in the world.



S :: L :: A :: du Phil ... Inc ... N :: V :: M ::

Pentagrammaton on the title page of  
“The Light of Martinism.”





The Shekinah in the Grand Temple, Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, California.

## ENDNOTES

1. There is no universally accepted method for spelling Hebrew words using the English alphabet. In direct quotations from other works, the original author's spelling has been retained, trusting that the reader will not be troubled by the resulting inconsistencies in spelling.
2. Henrietta Bernstein, *Cabalab Primer: Introduction to English/Hebrew Cabalah* (Marina del Rey: DeVorss & Company, 1984), 17.
3. "According to a sixteenth-century kabbalist [R. Moshe Cordovero], the whole process of emanation can be described as the successive impregnations and births of the sephiroth from one another, beginning with Causa Causarum and ending with the last sephirah." Moshe Idel, "Sexual Metaphors and Praxis in the Kabbalah," in *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory*, ed. David Kraemer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 210.
4. Hayyim Vital, *The Tree of Life: Chayyim Vital's Introduction to the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria. Volume I: The Palace of Adam Kadmon*, trans. Donald Wilder Menzi and Zwe Padeh (New York: Arizal Publications Inc., 2008).
5. "The seven lower sephiroth were generated out of the union between Hokhmah and Binah, the seven sephiroth being commonly considered the 'sons' of the higher sephiroth." Idel, "Sexual Metaphors," 210.
6. It seems appropriate to use *Tiferet* to represent these six *Sefiroth*. *Tiferet* is centrally located among the six. In the Tree of Life diagram, *Tiferet* is the only *Sefirah* that is directly connected by paths to the other five. *Tiferet* is *Sefirah* #6. It is also associated with the third letter of the Tetragrammaton, *Vav*, which has the numerical value of six. See Vital, *Tree of Life*, 60.
7. Daniel C. Matt, trans., *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition. Vol. III* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 274.
8. A. E. Waite, *The Holy Kabbalah: A Mystical Interpretation of the Scriptures* (New York: Citadel Press, 1995), 392-393.
9. Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 75.
10. Idel, "Sexual Metaphors," 207.
11. Green, *Guide*, 52.
12. *Ibid.*, 130.
13. S. P. Berg, *The Kabbalistic Daily Prayer Book: Siddur T'filah L'ani For Weekdays* (New York: Yeshivat Kol Yehuda Press, 1999), 31.
14. Idel, "Sexual Metaphors," 207-208.
15. Green, *Guide*, 115.
16. Moshe Idel, "Introduction to the Bison Book Edition," in Johann Reuchlin, *On The Art of the Kabbalah: De Arte Cabalistica*, trans. Martin and Sarah Goodman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), xix. G. Lloyd Jones, "Introduction," in Reuchlin, *Art of the Kabbalah*, 17. Reuchlin, *Art of the Kabbalah*, 77 and 353.

# PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA AND THE CABALA

*Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, D. Phil.*

*Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, D. Phil., Oxon, (1953-2012), was an eminent professor of Western Esotericism at the University of Exeter (<http://centres.exeter.ac.uk/exesesol>) and co-founder of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism. In this article, Professor Goodrick-Clarke introduces us to the extraordinary influence of Pico della Mirandola and the Cabala on Western thought.*

From pp. 41 - 46 of *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction*, "Italian Renaissance Magic and Cabala" by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, ©2008. Reprinted with permission of Oxford University Press ([www.oup.com](http://www.oup.com)).

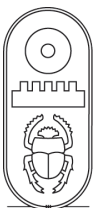


Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), a young contemporary of \*Marsilio Ficino developed an even more powerful variety of Renaissance magic by introducing the Jewish Kabbalah into Western thought. Pico's wealth, nobility, personal charm, and handsome face have combined with his precocious brilliance and early death to make him one of the famous figures of the Renaissance. Unlike Ficino, the retiring cleric and scholar, Pico led a varied life within the few years granted to him. His ambitious claims for Renaissance magic initially brought him into conflict with various theologians, and his work was condemned by Pope Innocent VIII. He is most famous for his Oration on the Dignity of Man (1487), which proclaims the centrality, importance, and freedom of man in the universe.

Pico was a younger son in the family of the counts of Mirandola and Concordia, who ruled as feudal lords over a small territory in northern Italy. Destined by his mother for a Church career, he was named papal protonotary at the age of ten and began to study canon law at Bologna in 1477, at age thirteen. Two years later, he commenced the study of philosophy at the University of Ferrara, subsequently moving in 1482 to the University of Padua, one of the leading Aristotelian centers. Here he

was the pupil of the Jewish philosopher Elia del Medigo. At this time he was in touch with humanist scholars in different places, and he visited Florence repeatedly, where he met Ficino. He spent the following years at home and on various visits, while continuing the study of Greek. In 1486, he returned to Florence, but, after becoming involved in a strange love affair, he moved to Perugia, where he studied Hebrew and Arabic under the guidance of several Jewish teachers, including the mysterious Flavius Mithridates.<sup>1</sup>

This period marked the beginning of his interest in the Jewish Kabbalah, a medieval mystical and speculative tradition that claimed an ancient origin but was in fact much influenced by Neoplatonism. Pico's Christian Cabala (the Latin term was usual among Renaissance Christian writers) was based on the tradition developed by Jews in Spain during the Middle Ages. Although the Jews were not finally expelled from Spain until 1492, their persecution by the Catholic authorities there had already encouraged many to flee to France and Italy. Pico learned the Kabbalah direct from the Spanish Jew Flavius Mithridates and others. This cultural transfer of Jewish wisdom from the West comparable to the earlier import of Greek learning from the East enabled Pico to immerse himself in this Jewish mystical and magical system.





This medieval Jewish Kabbalah was based on the ten *sephiroth* and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The doctrine of the *sephiroth* was first laid down in the Book of Creation (*Sefer Yetzirah*), dating back to the third century A.D., when Greek Jews were also receptive to the Neoplatonist currents of late antiquity. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a particular esoteric teaching emerged in Provence and northern Spain with the Book of Illumination (*Sefer Bahir*), composed by Isaac the Blind (fl. 1190–1210). This Kabbalah interpreted the *sephiroth* as powers of God arranged in a specific structure. The *Bahir* was also the first text to describe the *sephiroth* as a “tree of emanation,” which from the fourteenth century onward was depicted in a detailed diagram widely familiar today as the Tree of Life. The *Bahir* also aided the development of speculative Kabbalah based on the *sephiroth* as cosmic principles arranged in a primal group of three major emanations above a lower group of seven. The doctrine was developed further in the Book of Splendor (*Sefer Zohar*), written in Spain during the thirteenth century, which represents the tradition adopted by Pico. The *sephiroth* are the ten names or expressions of God, and the created universe is seen as the external manifestation of these forces. This creative aspect of the *sephiroth* links them to cosmology, and there is a relationship between the ten *sephiroth* and the ten spheres of the cosmos, composed of the spheres of the seven planets, the sphere of fixed stars, and the higher spheres beyond these.<sup>2</sup>

The ten *sephiroth* are arranged in a cosmological system known as the Tree of Life, whose structure provides for twenty-two pathways between the various spheres. These pathways correspond to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet but also denote angels or divine spirits which act as intermediaries throughout the

system and are themselves arranged in hierarchies. Similarly, there are also bad angels or demons, organized in hierarchies corresponding to their good opposites. Jewish Kabbalistic mysticism was also connected with the Scriptures through three kinds of exegetical techniques based on manipulations of the words and letters of the Hebrew text, known as *gematria*, *notarikon*, and *themurah*. These ideas derived from the *Ginnat Egoz* (*Garden of Nuts*), written in 1274 by the Castilian Joseph ben Abraham Gikatilla (ca. 1247–1305), a pupil of the famous Kabbalist Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia (1240—ca. 1292), who had introduced an ecstatic Kabbalah whereby the *sephiroth* led on to the mystical contemplation to the Divine Names of the Creator. These exercises were typically mystical, but there was also a magical side to Kabbalah. As a means of approaching the *sephiroth*, seventy-two angels could be invoked by a person who knew their names and numbers, and these were also efficient if Hebrew words, letters, or signs were suitably arranged.

Pico discerned a wonderful symmetry between the Kabbalah and Hermeticism. The Egyptian lawgiver Hermes Trismegistus had revealed mystical teachings, including an account of Creation which hinted at his knowledge of Moses’ wisdom. In Pico’s view, the Kabbalah offered a further body of mystical doctrine, supposedly derived from the Hebrew lawgiver, and a parallel view on cosmology. Armed with a greater knowledge of Hebrew than any other non-Jewish scholar and his burning interest in the Kabbalah, Pico set down a new synthesis of Hermetic-Cabalistic magic in twenty-six “Magical Conclusions.”

Here Pico dismissed medieval magic as the work of the devil but praised “natural magic” as a legitimate establishment of links between heaven and earth by the proper use of natural substances as recommended by the principles of sympathetic magic

(Magical Conclusion 1). He went on to recommend Orphic incantations for magical purposes (Magical Conclusion 2), evidently referring to Ficino's magic, whose practices he already knew well through the Academy at Florence.<sup>3</sup>

Flushed with confidence in the powers of Cabala, Pico then described the limitations of Ficinian practice. Pico regarded Ficino's natural magic as a weak and ineffective form of magic unless it was combined with Cabala (Magical Conclusion 15). Similarly, he held that no powerful magic could be performed without a knowledge of Hebrew (Magical Conclusion 22) and even dismissed the Orphic singing for magical operations in the absence of Cabala (Magical Conclusion 21). In his *Cabalistic Conclusions and Apology* (1487), Pico distinguishes between various forms of Cabala. "Speculative Cabala" he divides into four types: first, the mystical manipulation of letters, followed by the exploration of the three worlds—the sensible or terrestrial world, the celestial world of the stars, and the supercelestial world of the *sephiroth* and the angels.<sup>4</sup>

These latter categories were of prime importance to Pico's magic. Pico asserts that this kind of Cabala is a "way of capturing the powers of superior things" and is "the supreme part of natural magic." Whereas natural magic aims no higher than the terrestrial world and the stars, Cabala can be used to operate beyond in the supercelestial spheres of the angels, archangels, the *sephiroth*, and God. Natural magic uses characters, but Cabala uses numbers through its use of letters (Magical Conclusion 25). Natural magic uses only intermediary causes, the stars. Cabala goes straight to the first cause, God himself (Magical Conclusion 26).<sup>5</sup>

Pico elaborates in his *Apology* how cabalists may use the secret Hebrew names of God and names of angels,

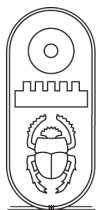


Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.

invoking them in the powerful Hebrew language or by magical combinations of the sacred Hebrew alphabet. Just as there are superior spirits on these higher planes, higher spiritual beings, great demons also inhabit these regions. Pico solemnly warns the cabalist to work in a spirit of piety (Magical Conclusion 6). In his seventy-two Cabalistic Conclusions, Pico demonstrates his detailed knowledge of the Jewish system. He writes that the Cabalist can communicate with God through the archangels in an ecstasy that may result in the death of the body, a way of dying known as the "Death of the Kiss" (Cabalistic Conclusion 11). He sets out a table which shows the correspondences between the ten spheres of the cosmos and the ten *sephiroth* (Cabalistic Conclusion 48). He also describes the states of the soul in relation to the meanings of the ten *sephiroth* (such as unity, intellect, reason) and traditionally links the highest *sephiroth* with the lowest in a circular arrangement (Cabalistic Conclusion 66).<sup>6</sup>

### **The Oration on the Dignity of Man**

Pico's famous *Oration on the Dignity of Man* was written as an introduction to his





Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (middle) with Agnolo Poliziano (right) and Marsilio Ficino (left). Cosimo Rosselli, Chiesa di S.Ambrogio, Firenze (1484 – 86). <http://www.pico-kabbalah.eu/>

nine hundred theses, which he took with him to Rome in 1486 in order to engage in a great public debate. The *Oration* has rightly been regarded as a masterpiece of rhetoric, celebrating the newfound independence and confidence of Renaissance man. Pico's statement marks the sea-change between the medieval mind and the modern mind, the tremendous growth in man's sense of autonomy and dignity which had grown up with humanism. The *Oration* also rejects as inadequate the traditional grounds for Man's importance in the world: his reason, or his place as the microcosm. Pico claims that Man's true greatness lies in his freedom to become whatever he wants to be. Both animals and angels have their fixed place in the universe and are powerless to change their natures. But God gave to Man, alone of all creatures, no fixed abode, form, or function. Free of such limitations, he has the power to change and develop, to make and mould himself.<sup>7</sup>

What was the ultimate goal of man's existential freedom? Imagining God addressing Adam, Pico attributes to Man

the power to be reborn into the higher forms. Pico opens the *Oration* with the quotation: "A great miracle, Asclepius, is man." Whereas the Fathers of the Church had placed man in a dignified position as the highest of terrestrial beings, as a spectator of the universe, Pico was citing the Hermetic text *Asclepius* with its promise of man's equality with the gods:

"Man is a miracle, a living thing to be worshipped and honored: for he changes his nature into a god's, as if he were a god. . . . Conjoined to the gods by a kindred divinity, he despises inwardly that part of him in which he is earthly."<sup>8</sup>

Introducing the contents of his nine hundred theses, Pico ranges over all the philosophers and mysteries he has studied. A keynote of his *philosophia nova* is an attempt to establish a concordance or correlation between all ancient philosophies in support of a pristine theology (*prisca theologia*). A tribute to his precocious learning (he was only twenty-four), the names of the Latins Duns Scotus, Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Franciscus de Mayronis, Albertus Magnus, and Henry of Ghent are followed by the Arabs Avicenna, Averroes, and al-Farabi. Further back among the ancients he invokes the Greek Peripatetics and then the Neoplatonists Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus. At the very source of the ancient wisdom stand Pythagoras, Mercurius Trismegistus, Zoroaster, and the "Hebrew Cabalist wisemen," whose knowledge, Pico asserts, was later detected by al-Kindi, Roger Bacon, and William of Paris.<sup>9</sup> However, the great themes of Magia



and Cabala echo through the *Oration*. The “ancient theology of Hermes Trismegistus” and “the occult mysteries of the Hebrews” offer the prime means of man’s promotion to the divine realms. “As the farmer weds his elms to vines, even so does the magus wed earth to heaven.” The *Oration* alludes to esoteric knowledge known only to the few. Pico speaks of occult Hebraic law, vouchsafed only to initiates, and he recalls the symbolism of the sphinxes on Egyptian temples, indicating that mystic doctrines should be kept secret from the common herd.<sup>10</sup>

Pico’s subsequent career was turbulent. As soon as he published his nine hundred theses, several Roman theologians raised an outcry about their heretical character, and Pope Innocent VIII appointed a commission to examine them. Pico was summoned to appear several times before this commission, and several of the theses were condemned. Undaunted, in May 1487 Pico published, together with part of the *Oration*, an apologia defending the condemned theses. This challenge involved him in fresh difficulties, and bishops with inquisitorial powers were appointed to deal with his case. In July, Pico made a formal submission and retraction to the commission, and in August the pope issued a bull condemning all the theses and forbidding their publication. Lorenzo de’ Medici interceded for Pico with the pope, and Pico was thereafter permitted to live in Florence under Medici protection. On 17 November 1494, the day the armies of King Charles VIII of France entered Florence, Pico died of a fever. He was thirty-one.<sup>11</sup>

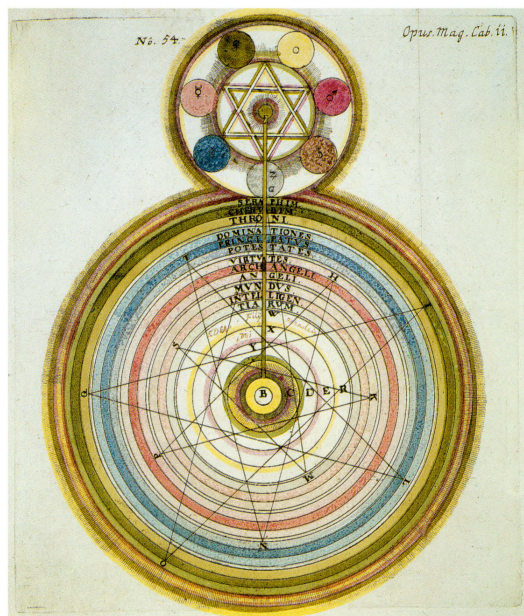
Ficino and Pico were seminal figures in the revival of Hermeticism, Neoplatonism, magic, and Kabbalah in Renaissance Europe. Their interest in the power of sympathetic and Cabalistic magic to effect changes in nature signal a new appreciation

of man’s ability to operate on the mundane world through the knowledge and application of correspondences between the higher and lower worlds. As Frances Yates has suggested, this attitude anticipates the exploration and confidence of natural science. However, their emphasis on the hierarchy of spiritual intermediaries in the form of attributes, letters, numbers, transmutation of the soul indicate that this philosophy of nature was intimately bound up with religious experience and an approach to God. Renaissance magic is thus a form of sacred science.

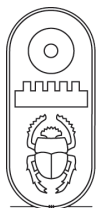
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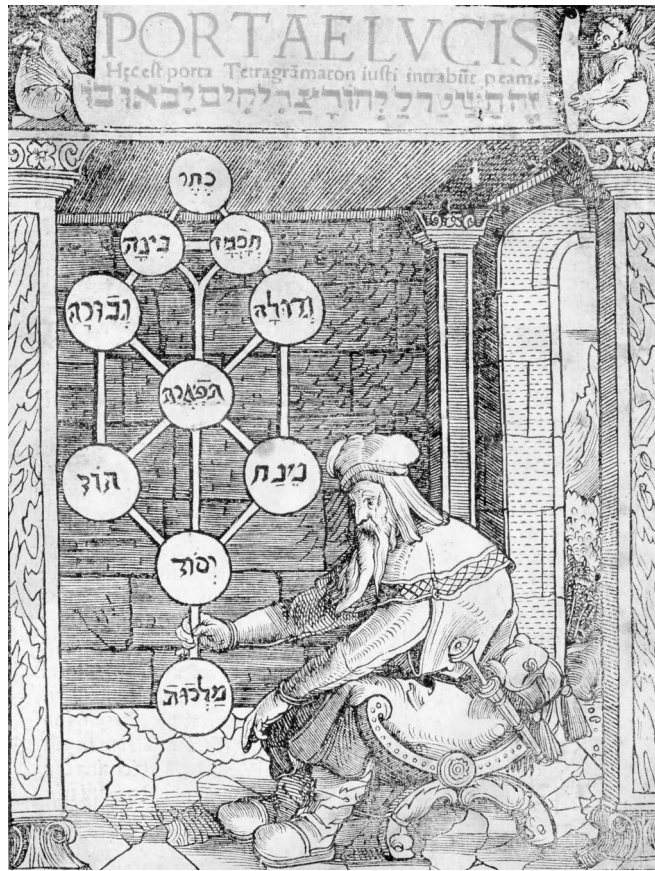
\*Editor’s Note: This article is the second half of the chapter entitled “Italian Renaissance Magic and Cabala” in *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction* by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke. The first half of the chapter, published in the *Rosicrucian Digest*, Volume 90, Number 1, 2012, introduced readers to the Neoplatonism of Renaissance Florence and the eminent Neoplatonist, Marsilio Ficino.

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No. 54, *Opus Mag. Cab. ii.*





## ENDNOTES

1. Frances Yates offers a summary chapter on Pico's life and contribution to Kabbalistic magic in *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 84-116. Cf. Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Renaissance*, pp. 54-71. For his Jewish teacher, see Chaim Wirszubiski's introduction to his edition of Flavius Mithridates, *Sermo de Passione Dei* (Jerusalem, 1963) and his article "Giovanni Pico's Companion to Kabbalistic Symbolism," in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion*, presented to G. G. Scholem (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 353-362.
2. For a helpful account of the historical development of Jewish Kabbalah as a current of Western esotericism, see Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, pp. 31-41. Definitive studies of are offered by Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Penguin/ Meridian, 1978), and *Origins of the Kabbalah*, edited by R. J. Werblowsky, translated by A. Arkush (Princeton, N J.: Princeton University Press, 1990); Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988); *The Early Kabbalah*, edited by Joseph Dan, translated by R. C. Kiener (New York: Paulist Press, 1986).
3. Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Renaissance*, pp. 61f, takes up the theme of Pico's syncretism and interest in establishing "concordance" (Faivre's fifth characteristic of esotericism) between the Kabbalah and the Bible within a *prisca theologia* identified with Hermes and Zoroaster. A substantial monograph on Pico's thought with special reference to his Roman debate and the full text of his nine hundred theses is offered by Stephen Alan Farmer, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses* (1486), *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 167 (Tempe: Arizona State University Press, 1998).
4. F. A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 91, 95.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-102.
7. The *Oration on the Dignity of Man* is discussed by Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Renaissance*, pp. 65-68. See also the full English translation of the text and commentary by Kristeller in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, edited by Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, John Herman Randall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), pp. 215-256.
8. Kristeller, *Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, p. 223; the quotation refers to the sixth passage in the *Asclepius* in Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 69.
9. S. A. Farmer, *Syncretism in the West*, pp. 204-205, offers an outline of Pico's first 400 theses which trace philosophy from the Latin scholastics back to the harmonious ancients and "Hebrew Cabalist wisemen." This quasihistorical survey reflects Pico's insistence on correspondences within an emanational cosmology. Cf. *Oration*, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, pp. 242-249.
10. Kristeller, *Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, p. 250.
11. Kristeller, *Eight Italian Philosophers of the Renaissance*, pp. 56-57.



# THE KABBALISTIC ORDER OF THE ROSE-CROIX

*Christian Rebisse, FRC*

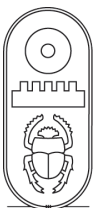
*In his book, Rosicrucian History and Mysteries, Christian Rebisse describes the many traditions that contributed to what would become the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC and to some extent the Traditional Martinist Order. The excerpt below briefly describes the history of the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix and its founders who greatly influenced both traditions.*



The Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix. Seated in front, from left to right, are Papus, Joséphin Péladan, and Stanislas de Guaita.

While Joséphin Péladan was savoring the success of his first novel, his brother Adrien died on September 29, 1885, poisoned by a medicine improperly measured by his pharmacist. An article announcing his death, in the journal *Le Messager de Toulouse*, described him as a Rosicrucian. The text was signed “a Catholic R+C.” Behind this signature we must see Firmin Boissin, the editor-in-chief of this journal. Let us add that the latter knew the photographer Clovis Lassalle, whom he met through the printer Paul Édouard Privat. In turn, H. Spencer Lewis was to meet Clovis Lassalle many years later in Toulouse.

During this period, the friendship between Josephin Péladan and Stanislas de Guaita took shape, and upon the advice of the writer, the latter got in touch with Firmin Boissin. On August 12, 1886, Stanislas de Guaita informed Joséphin that he had received a long and learned letter from his friend “Bois+sin.” The way in which he wrote this name, with a cross in its center, is strange, and it is interesting to note that after this correspondence Stanislas de Guaita signed his letters with the expression “R+C” and called Joséphin Péladan “my dear Frater.”<sup>1</sup> Can it be concluded that he had been received into the order by Firmin Boissin?



Events seem to have come to a head at this time. Many occultists then living in Paris were members of the Theosophical Society, but they remained disappointed by its excessively Eastern teachings. Included among them was Gérard Encausse (1865-1916), better known as Papus. As a student of medicine he had the opportunity to work with Dr. Jules Luys, who had done some research in hypnosis at La Charité Hospital in Paris. It was there that he met Augustin Chaboseau (1868-1946), with whom he soon reorganized the Martinist Order. In 1888, after the death of its president, Louis Dramart, the French division of the Theosophical Society fragmented. He published his *Traité élémentaire de science occulte* (Elementary Treatise on Occultism; 1888), a book with which he wanted to restore Western esotericism and to put occultism on an equal basis with subjects taught in the universities.

Afterwards, in September 1889, Pierre-Gaëtan Leymarie (1817-1901), who directed the spiritist movement since the death of Allan Kardec, organized an international spiritist and spiritualistic congress in which Papus, F.-Ch. Barlet, Augustin Chaboseau, and Chamuel participated. This important event allowed occultists to free themselves from the Theosophical movement, especially as the journal *L'Initiation*, launched by Papus and his friends in October 1888, began to experience some success. Seeking to place itself under the auspices of a secular tradition, the occultists attempted to make Rosicrucianism and Martinism the pillars of a new temple that they wished to erect. Joséphin Péladan and Stanislas de Guaita were associated with this project, and at the time when the Rose-Croix was ebbing away in Toulouse, they made the decision to restore it. "The ancient order of the Rose-Croix being on the point of going dormant, three years ago [the author wrote in 1890], when two direct heirs of

its august traditions resolved to restore it by consolidating it on new foundations ... and now life cycles throughout the mystical body of the rejuvenated colossus."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, moving from Toulouse to Paris (1887-1888), the restored Rose-Croix became the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix. This order was directed by a supreme council of twelve members, of whom six remained unknown, their role consisting of rebuilding the organization if it were to be dissolved for any reason whatsoever. Among those who were members of the "Council of Twelve" at one time or another, let us mention Stanislas de Guaita, Joséphin Péladan, Papus, A. Gabrol, Henry Thorion, F.-Ch. Barlet, Augustin Chaboseau, Victor-Émile Michelet, Sédir, and Marc Haven. The order was structured around a hierarchy of three degrees acquired by examination (Bachelor of Kabbalah, Master of Kabbalah, Doctor of Kabbalah), and entry



Joséphin Péladan.

into the order was reserved to Martinists having achieved the S.I. degree.

### The Rose-Croix of the Temple and the Grail

Thanks to the journal *L'Initiation*, the order became well known, and before long a troop of eager occultists came knocking at the temple door. Stanislas de Guaita, who lived like a hermit in his first floor apartment on Trudaine Avenue, allowed Papus to organize matters. But the capricious personality of an artist such as Joséphin Péladan was hardly suited for associating with such a strong-willed organizer as Papus. The latter wanted to open up the order and broaden it. In contrast, Joséphin Péladan wanted to reserve access to carefully selected initiates and was not at all in accord with the Masonic aspect that Papus wanted to impose upon the order. The positions of these two men were reconciled only with difficulty, especially as Joséphin Péladan

reproached Papus for his taste in occultism and magic. Along with Abbé Alta, one of the eminent members of the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix, Joséphin reproached Papus for confusing occultism and esotericism. On February 17, 1891, Péladan wrote a letter to Papus, published in the April issue of the journal *L'Initiation*, that severed their relationship.

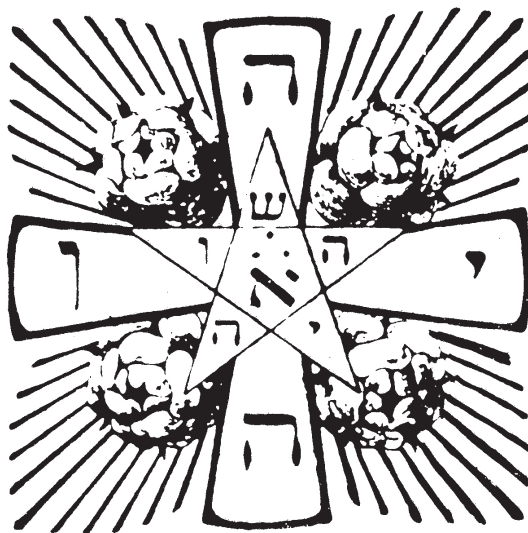
Heir to a tradition that he felt was on the verge of losing its mission, Péladan decided to work along different lines and thus founded in May 1891 the Order of the Rose-Croix du Temple et du Graal (also called the Order of the Rose-Croix Catholique du Temple et du Graal), which he had already outlined in *Le Vice suprême*, his first novel, in 1884. In June 1891, he designated himself as the Grand Master of this new order, using the name of Sâr Mérodack Péladan. This event was given considerable space in many articles for *Le Figaro*, and this great publicity profoundly irritated Papus and his friends who denounced Péladan's split.

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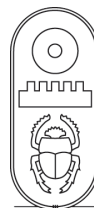
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#### ENDNOTES

1. *Lettres inédites de Stanislas de Guaita au Sâr Joséphin Péladan*, edited by Édouard Bertholet and Émile Dantinne (Neuchatel: Éditions rosicruciennes, 1952).
  2. Stanislas de Guaita, "Au seuil du mystère," *Essais de sciences maudites* (Paris: Geroges Carré, 1890) p. 158.
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Symbol of the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix.



# THE KABBALAH: SECRET TRADITION OF THE WEST

*Papus*

*Gérard Encausse, MD (1865-1916), better known by his mystical pseudonym, Papus, was one of the co-founders of the Martinist Order and the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix (1888). As noted in the article on page 41, the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix was structured around a hierarchy of three degrees acquired by examination – Bachelor of Kabbalah, Master of Kabbalah, and Doctor of Kabbalah.*

*The following text is an excerpt from the book written by Papus entitled The Kabbalah: Secret Tradition of the West. Translation by the staff of the Rosicrucian Digest.*



Papus.

## The Kabbalah

Now we come to the superior part of the tradition, to the Secret Doctrine or Kabbalah, the veritable soul of this tradition.

It can be seen from the table given (Table No. 1) that the theoretical part of the Kabbalah is the only section known to us, the practical or magic parts still being kept secret, or scarcely being touched upon in some rare manuscripts.

## 1 Theoretical Kabbalah

The theoretical part has been considered from quite different points of view by the authors who examine this question. Let us briefly examine the most important principles of their work.

The first group of researchers, the most numerous, follows the divisions given by the Kabbalists themselves. This is the plan followed by Mr. *Ad. Franck* in his fine work (1843), by *Eliphas Lévi* (1853), and

# Papus: Epistemology of The Kabbalah

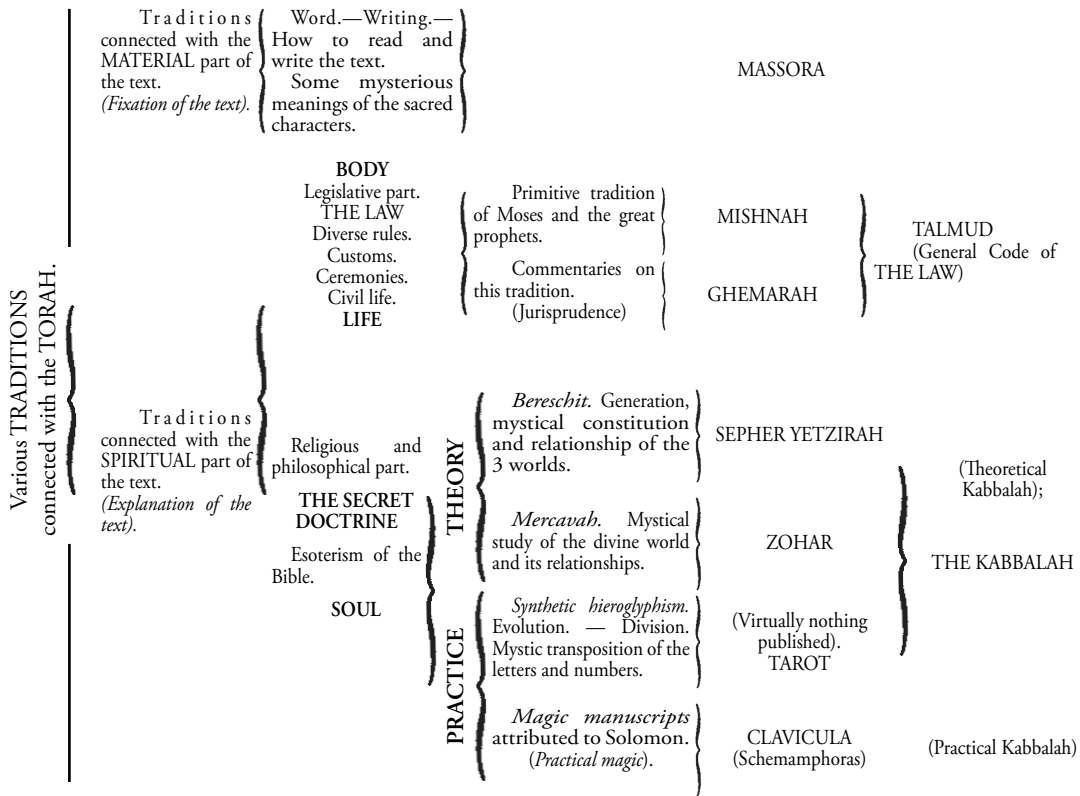


Table No. 1.

by Mr. *Isidore Loeb* (entry *Cabbale* in the *Grande Encyclopédie*).

The principal subjects of mystic speculation of the time are the *work of the chariot* (*maasse mercaba*), by allusion to Ezekiel's Chariot, and *work of creation* (*maasse bereschit*).

The work of the chariot, which is also the great work (*dabar gadol*), discusses the beings of the supernatural world, God, the powers, the fundamental ideas, the "heavenly family" as it is sometimes called; the work of creation discusses generation and the nature of the terrestrial world.

Here is this division:

KABBALAH: <i>Maasse Mercaba</i>	ZOHAR ( <i>work of the chariot</i> )
<i>Maasse Bereschit</i>	S E P H E R Y E T Z I R A H ( <i>work of creation</i> )

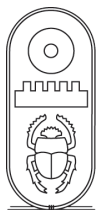
Other writers, such as Mr. *S. Munk* divide the Kabbalah in the following fashion:

## KABBALAH

1. Symbolic	Mystic calculations Themurah Gematria Notarikon
2. Positive, Dogmatic	Angels and demons Divisions Trasmigration of souls
3. Speculative and metaphysical	Sephiroth, etc.

As can be seen, Mr. *S. Munk* tends toward the old division adopted by certain Kabbalists, notably *Kircher*.

But the most complete division, in our opinion, of the Kabbalah is that of *Molitor*: this is the one which we ourselves have adopted in the general





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## KABBALAH

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THEORETICAL	BERESCHIT Sepher Yetzirah.	First degree. Historical Legends. <i>Haggadah.</i>
	MERCABA Zohar.	Second degree. Practical morals.
PRACTICAL	Virtually nothing written	Third degree.
	MAGICAL MANUSCRIPTS ( <i>Clavicula</i> )	Mystical doctrine.  ( <i>Practical magic.</i> )

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table given previously, for it has the merit of conforming in a general way to the generally adopted divisions while going beyond them, complementing them as it were by the recognition of a practical part.

Traditional teaching, triune like human nature and human needs, was at the same time *historical*, *moral*, and *mystical*; thus the sacred writing contained a triple sense:

1. The literal, historical sense (*pashut*), which corresponds to the body and to the square of the temple;
2. Moral teachings (*drusch*), to the soul or the sacred;
3. And last, the mystical sense (*sod*), which represents the spirit and the holy of holies.

The first, composed of certain stories taken from the lives of the ancient patriarchs, was transmitted from generation to generation, like so many popular legends. It is found scattered here and there in the form of comments, in Biblical manuscripts and Chaldean paraphrases.

The moral sense looked at everything from a practical point of view, while the mystical, rising above the visible transitory world, hovered unceasingly in the sphere of the eternal.

The mystical sense thus required a secret discipline, exacting an uncommon piety of soul.

These two conditions call for the initiation of a disciple, regardless of age or status; it sometimes happened that a father would instruct his children while they were very young.

This high tradition is called *Kabbalah* (in Hebrew, KIBBEL, to join together). Within its exterior form the word conceals the aptitude of the soul to conceive supernatural ideas.

The Kabbalah was divided into two parts: the theoretical and the practical.

1. Patriarchal traditions on the sacred mystery of God and the divine persons;
2. On spiritual creation and the fall of the angels;
3. On the origin of chaos, matter, and the renovation of the world during the six days of creation;
4. On the creation of the visible person [humanity], his fall, and the divine ways leading to his reinstatement.

Otherwise stated, it treated:

- The work of creation (*Masse Bereschit*).
- The heavenly chariot (*Mercabah*)

The work of creation is contained in the *Sepher Yetzirah*.

We were responsible for the first French translation of this book (1887). Since then, a new translation has appeared, more developed, thanks to more complete originals, made by Mr. *Mayer-Lambert*.

We recommend this very serious work with great enthusiasm. Only one regret: the absence of a bibliography which would have been most useful for all concerned.

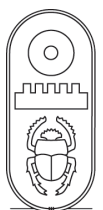
So that the reader may, in so far as possible, supplement our translation, which is to be found further on, we provide here a table below summarizing the supplementary developments of the *Sepher Yetzirah*. We have modified the relation of the planets and the days of the week, since the earlier relations seem to us to have been erroneously established due to a poor understanding of the connection between the order of the planets and the order of the days. The Egyptian clock given by Alliette (Etteila) clearly shows the source of this error.

The work of the heavenly chariot is contained in the *Zohar*. Since we do not

have space here to give a translation of this book (translations already exist in Latin and in English), let us be content with the excellent summary of Mr. *Isidore Loeb* in the *Grande Encyclopédie* (entry *Cabbale*).

The *Zohar* is a cabbalistic commentary on the Pentateuch; it is not certain that we possess it in its original form, and the form we do possess may be the work of several people. It is a vast compilation including, along with the ideas of the writer or writers, other more or less ancient works, such as the *Book of the Secret*, *The Great Assembly*, *The Lesser Assembly*, *The Book of Heavenly Tents*, *The Faithful Shepherd*, *The Discourse of a Young Man [Person]*, and others.

LETTER	UNIVERSE	YEAR	MAN	MORAL WORLD	
א	Alef AIR	Atmosphere	Temperate (spring or autumn)	Chest	Rule of Equilibrium
ב	Mem WATER	Earth	Winter	Stomach	Plane of Fault
ג	Shin EARTH	Heaven	Summer	Head	Plane of Worth
ד	Bet	Saturn	Saturday SATURDAY	Mouth	Life and Death
ה	Gimel	Jupiter	Sunday THURSDAY	Right eye	Peace and Misfortune
ו	Dalet	Mars	Monday TUESDAY	Left eye	Wisdom and Foolishness
ז	Kaf	Sun	Tuesday SUNDAY	Right nostril	Richness and Poverty
ח	Pay	Venus	Wednesday FRIDAY	Left nostril	Culture and Barrenness
ט	Resh	Mercury	Thursday WEDNESDAY	Right ear	Grace and Unsightliness
י	Tav	Moon	Friday MONDAY	Left ear	Domination and Servitude
יא	Hay	Aries	March	Liver	Sight and Blindness
יב	Vav	Taurus	April	Bladder	Hearing and Deafness
יג	Zayin	Gemini	May	Spleen	Smell and Absence of Smell
יד	Chet	Cancer	June	Loins	Speech and Muteness
טו	Tet	Leo	July	Right kidney	Fulness and Hunger
טז	Yud	Virgo	August	Left kidney	Coitus and Castration
יז	Lamed	Libra	September	Large intestine	Activity and Powerlessness
יח	Nun	Scorpio	October	Small intestine	Soundness of Step and Lameness
יט	Samekh	Sagittarius	November	Right hand	Anger and the Removal of the Liver
כ	Ayin	Capricorn	December	Left hand	Laughter and the Removal of the Spleen
כא	Tzaddi	Aquarius	January	Right foot	Thought and the Removal of the Heart
כב	Kuf	Pisces	February	Left foot	Sleep and Languor



# KABBALAH AND CONTEMPORARY COSMOLOGY: DISCOVERING THE RESONANCE

*Daniel C. Matt, Ph.D.*

*Daniel C. Matt, Ph.D., one of the world's foremost authorities on Jewish mysticism, served as Professor of Jewish Spirituality at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California for more than twenty years. He received his Ph.D. from Brandeis University and has also taught at Stanford University and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.*

*This article is based on Dr. Matt's book God and the Big Bang: Discovering Harmony between Science and Spirituality, published by Jewish Lights. Dr. Matt is also the author of The Essential Kabbalah and of the multi-volume annotated translation of the Zohar entitled The Zohar: Pritzker Edition. Reprinted with permission of the author.*



In the beginning was the big bang, fourteen billion years ago. The primordial vacuum was devoid of matter, but not really empty – rather, in a state of minimum energy, pregnant with potential, teeming with virtual particles. Through a quantum fluctuation, a sort of bubble, in this vacuum, there emerged a hot, dense seed, smaller than a proton, yet containing all the mass and energy of our universe. In less than a trillionth of a second, this seed cooled and expanded wildly, faster than the speed of light, inflating into the size of a grapefruit. The expansion then slowed down, but it has never stopped.

In its first few seconds, the universe was an undifferentiated soup of matter and radiation. It took a few minutes for things to cool down enough for nuclei to form, and at least 300,000 years for atoms to form. For eons, clouds of gas expanded. Huge glimmering balls of hot gas formed into stars. Deep within these stars, nuclear reactions gave birth to elements such as carbon and iron. When the stars grew old, they exploded, spewing these elements into the universe. Eventually this matter was recycled into new solar systems. Our solar system is one example of this recycling, a

mix of matter produced by cycles of stars – stars forming and exploding. We along with everything else are literally made of stardust.

The Earth took shape and began cooling down about four and a half billion years ago. By about a billion years later, various microorganisms had developed. Exactly how, no one knows. We do know that earth's early atmosphere was composed of hydrogen, water vapor, carbon dioxide and simple gases such as ammonia and methane. In such a climate, organic compounds may have synthesized spontaneously.

Or perhaps life drifted to Earth in the form of spores from Mars or from another solar system in our galaxy or another galaxy in the universe. However life began, all its forms share similar genetic codes and can be traced back to a common ancestor. All living beings are cousins.

We humans like to think of ourselves as the pinnacle of creation, and it is true that we are the most complicated things in the universe. Our brain contains one hundred billion cells, linked by one hundred trillion synaptic connections. Yet we are part of the evolutionary process, descended from

bacteria who lived three-and-a-half billion years ago. In our mother's womb each of us retraces the entire developmental span from amoeba to human being. Our species – *Homo sapiens* – is a primate that developed in Africa, splitting away from the chimpanzee line about seven million years ago. We still share with the chimps 99 percent of our active genes. If you'll pardon the expression, we are an improved ape.

The big bang is a theory, not a fact. To cosmologists, it offers the most convincing explanation of the evolution of the universe, "the best approximation to truth that we currently possess." It may be proven wrong. More likely, it will eventually be enfolded within a larger theory. The scientific consensus is that the big bang theory is correct within its specific domain: the evolution of our universe from perhaps one-billionth of a second after its origins up to the present. Whatever happened before that first fraction of a second lies beyond the limits of the theory. The term "big bang" suggests a definite beginning a finite time ago, but the theory does not extend that far. The ultimate origin of the universe is still unfathomed.

One version of the theory, known as eternal inflation was developed by Andrei Linde. This version portrays a universe that, by continually reproducing itself, attains immortality. Our universe is just one of countless baby universes, one of countless inflating, self-reproducing balls or "bubbles." In each of these bubbles, the initial conditions differ and diverse kinds of elementary particles interact in unimagined ways. Perhaps, different laws of physics apply in each.

Not all the domains inflate into large bubbles, but those that do, like ours, dominate the volume of the universe and sprout other bubbles in a perpetual chain reaction. The entire universe is a tree of life, a cluster of bubbles attached to each other,

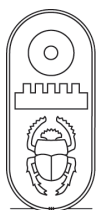
growing exponentially in time. Each baby universe is born in what can be considered a big bang – or should we say a little bang? – a fluctuation of the vacuum followed by inflation.

If Linde's speculations are correct, perhaps we should translate the opening words of Genesis not as "In *the* beginning..." but "In *a* beginning, God created heaven and earth." In fact, this represents a more literal rendering of the original Hebrew: *Be-Reshit*: "In a beginning."

Science has no consensus on the ultimate origin. Some theories espouse a well-defined beginning; others, like Stephen Hawking's, do not. But both suggest a radically new reading of Genesis. If God spoke the world into being, the divine language is energy; the alphabet, elementary particles; God's grammar, the laws of nature. Many scientists have sensed a spiritual dimension in the search for these laws. For Einstein, discerning the laws of nature was a way to discover how God thinks.

But does the universe have a purpose? Is there meaning to our existence? Why should we live ethically? Here, cosmology cannot help us very much. Darwin intensifies our problem. Are we different from other animals? Can we transcend violence and savagery? As the wife of an Anglican bishop remarked, upon hearing of Darwin's theory: "Descended from apes! My dear, let us hope that it is not true; but if it is, let us pray that it will not become generally known." Her comment echoes the fear that knowing the true nature of our ancestors threatens to unravel the social fabric.

We have lost our myth. A myth is a story, imagined or true, that helps us make our experience comprehensible by offering a construction of reality. It is a narrative that wrests order from chaos. We are not content to see events as unconnected, as



inexplicable. We crave to understand the underlying order in the world. A myth tells us why things are the way they are and where they came from. Such an account is not only comfortable, assuring and socially useful; it is essential. Without a myth, there is no meaning or purpose to life. There is just vast emptiness.

Myths do more than explain. They guide mental processes, conditioning how we think, even how we perceive. Myths come to life by serving as models for human behavior. On Friday evening, as my family begins *Shabbat* (the Sabbath), I sometimes imagine God, having created the world in one very packed week finally taking a break. According to the Bible, *Shavat va-yinnafash*, “God rested and was refreshed.” This mythical image enables me to pause, to slow down and appreciate creation. By observing *Shabbat*, I am imitating the divine. Order re-emerges out of the impending chaos of life.

What do we do when the myths of tradition have been undone, when the God of the Bible seems so unbelievable? Is there really someone “up there” in control, charting the course of history, reaching down to rescue those in need, tallying up our good and bad deeds for reward and punishment? Many people have shed the security of traditional belief; they are more likely to experience a gaping, aching void than the satisfying fullness of God’s presence. If they believe in anything, perhaps it’s science and technology. And what does science provide in exchange for this belief? Progress in every field except for one: the ultimate meaning of life. Some scientists insist that there is no meaning. As one leading physicist has written, “The more we know about the universe, the more it is evident that it is pointless and meaningless.”

The big bang is a contemporary Creation story. Energy turns into matter, which turns back into energy. There is no

precise plan for creation, worked out in advance. By an intricate and unrepeatable combination of chance and necessity, humanity has evolved from and alongside countless other forms of life over billions of years. Ultimately, our evolutionary history is uplifting: It enables us to see that we are part of a wholeness, a oneness.

To be “religious” means, in the words of a contemporary physicist, to have an intuitive feeling of the unity of the cosmos. This oneness is grounded in scientific fact: We are made of the same stuff as all of creation. Everything that is, was, or will be started off together as one infinitesimal point: the cosmic seed.

Life has since branched out, but this should not blind us to its underlying unity. The deepest marvel is the unity *in* diversity, the vast array of material manifestations of energy. Becoming aware of the multifaceted unity can help us learn how to live in harmony with other human beings and with all beings, with all our fellow transformations of energy and matter.

If the big bang is our new creation myth, the story that explains how the universe began, then who is God? “God” is a name we give to the oneness of it all.

How can you name oneness? How can you name the unnamable? The Jewish mystical tradition, the Kabbalah, offers a number of possibilities. One is *Ein Sof*, literally: “there is no end.” *Ein Sof* is the Infinite, or, to borrow a phrase from the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart, the God beyond God.

Sometimes the kabbalists use a more radical name than *Ein Sof*. This is the name *ayin* – nothingness. We encounter this bizarre term among Christian mystics as well: John Scotus Erigena calls God *nihil*; Eckhart, *nihts*; St. John of the Cross, *nada*. To call God “Nothingness” does not mean that God does not exist. Rather, it conveys the idea that God is no thing. God animates



all things and cannot be contained by any of them. God is the oneness that is no particular thing, no thingness.

This mystical nothingness is neither empty nor barren; it is fertile and overflowing, engendering the myriad forms of life. The mystics teach that the universe emanated from divine nothingness. Similarly, as we have seen, cosmologists speak of the quantum vacuum, teeming with potential, engendering the cosmic seed. This vacuum is anything but empty—a seething froth of virtual particles, constantly appearing and disappearing.

How did the universe emerge out of prolific nothingness? According to Kabbalah and classical big bang theory, this transition was marked by a single point.

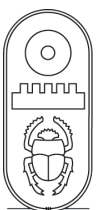
Physicists call this point a singularity: an infinitely dense point in spacetime. A singularity is both destructive and creative. Anything falling into a singularity merges with it, losing its identity, while energy emerging from a singularity can become anything. The laws of physics do not apply to the split second in which energy or mass emerges.

According to the thirteenth-century kabbalist, Moses de Leon,

The beginning of existence is the secret concealed point. This is the beginning of all the hidden things, which spread out from there and emanate, according to their species. From a single point you can extend the dimensions of all things.



*Visible View of Pillar and Jets HH 901/902.* NASA, ESA, and M. Livio and the Hubble 20th Anniversary Team (STScI).



As emanation proceeds, as God begins to unfold, the point expands into a circle. Similarly, ever since the big bang, our universe has been expanding. We know this thanks to the astronomer Edwin Hubble, who measured the speed at which other galaxies are moving away from us. In 1929 Hubble determined that the farther a galaxy is from us, the faster it is moving away. The universe is expanding in all directions. It's not that the universe is expanding *within* space. Space itself is expanding.

The most dramatic consequence of Hubble's discovery is what it tells us about the origin of our universe. Just play the Hubble tape in reverse: If the universe is now expanding, that means it was once much smaller. How small? According to classical big bang theory, if we go back far enough in spacetime and retrace the paths of the galaxies and their formation, the entire mass-energy of the universe contracts into the size of a singularity – the

infinitesimal point from which the cosmos flashed into existence.

One kabbalist, Shim'on Lavi, understands expansion as part of the rhythm of creation:

With the appearance of the light, the universe expanded.

With the concealment of the light, the things that exist were created in all their variety.

This is the mystery of the act of Creation.

One who understands will understand.

When light flashed forth, time and space began. But the early universe was an undifferentiated soup of energy and matter. How did matter emerge from the stew? The mystic writes that the light was concealed. A scientist would say that energy congealed. Matter is frozen energy. No nucleus or atom could form until some



*Hubble's Largest Galaxy Portrait Offers a New High-Definition View.* NASA, ESA, K. Kuntz (JHU), F. Bresolin (University of Hawaii), J. Trauger (Jet Propulsion Lab), J. Mould (NOAO), Y.-H. Chu (University of Illinois, Urbana), and STScI.



energy cooled down enough that it could be bound and bundled into stable particles of matter.

Einstein discovered the equivalence of mass and energy. Ultimately, matter is not distinct from energy, but simply energy that has temporarily assumed a particular pattern. Matter is energy in a tangible form; both are different states of a single continuum, different names for two forms of the same thing.

Like the physicist, the mystic, too, is fascinated by the intimate relation of matter and energy, though the mystical description is composed in a different key. Material existence emerges out of *ayin*, the pool of divine energy. Ultimately, the world is not other than God, for this divine energy is concealed within all forms of being. Were it not concealed, there could be no individual existence; everything would dissolve back into oneness, or nothingness.

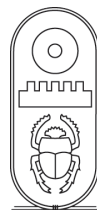
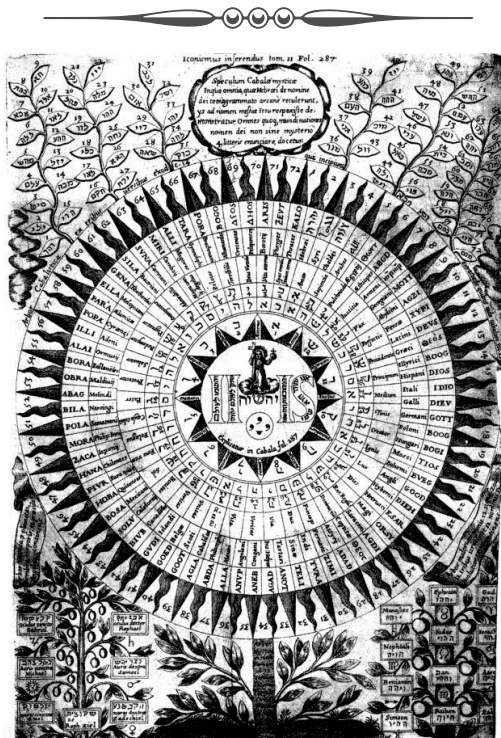
Around the middle of the sixteenth century in the mountaintop city of Safed

in Galilee, the most famous kabbalist who ever lived – Isaac Luria – pondered creation and asked himself, “What came before?” He believed there was only *Ein Sof*, God as infinity. But if *Ein Sof* pervaded all space, how could there be room for anything other than God? Luria concluded that the first act of creation was not emanation, but withdrawal: “Before the creation of the universe, *Ein Sof* withdrew itself into its essence, from itself to itself within itself. Within its essence, it left an empty space, in which it could emanate and create.”

This is *tsimtsum*, which literally means “contraction,” but here suggests withdrawal, a withdrawal by which God made room for something other than God. The primordial void carved out by *tsimtsum* became the site of creation: no larger than an infinitesimal point in relation to *Ein Sof*, yet spacious enough to house the cosmos. But the void was not really empty: It retained a trace, a residue of the light of *Ein Sof*, just as the vacuum preceding the big bang was not completely empty, but rather in a state of minimum energy: pregnant with creative potential and virtual particles.

As *Ein Sof* began to unfold, a ray of light was channeled into the void through vessels. Everything went smoothly at first, but some of the vessels, less translucent, could not withstand the power of the light. They shattered. Most of the light returned to its infinite source, “to the mother’s womb.” But the rest, falling as sparks along with shards of the shattered vessels, was eventually trapped in material existence. Our task, according to Kabbalah, is to liberate these sparks of light and restore them to divinity. By living ethically and spiritually, we raise the sparks and thereby bring about *tikkun*, the “repair” or mending of the cosmos.

If the vessels had not broken, our world of multiplicity would not exist. We exist because we have lost oneness.



Modern cosmology has a theory that parallels the breaking of the vessels: the theory of broken symmetry.

Symmetry can be unstable. Picture yourself at an elegant wedding dinner, sitting with a dozen other guests around a circular table. Champagne glasses have been placed precisely between each dinner plate and the next: perfect right-left symmetry. A waiter fills the glasses with champagne and everyone sits, waiting for someone else to lift a glass. You're a little thirsty and, realizing that the pink bubbles will not last forever, you decide to take a sip. But which champagne glass should you pick? Not fully versed in the rules of etiquette, you could as easily choose the glass to your left as the one to your right. Either way, as soon as you reach for one or the other, the symmetry is broken. Unless everyone else does what you do, someone will have to reach across the table to get a glass.

Let's take a more mundane example. Imagine that you're holding a handful of sharpened pencils, just snug enough that they stand on their points. Now let go. For a moment, the pencils remain balanced and rotationally symmetrical. Looking down from above, you see a perfect circle of pencil erasers. But the symmetry is quickly broken, as the pencils fall into a tangle of thick pickup sticks.

The pencils are a metaphor for the universe. The jumble of fallen pencils is the universe today, while the symmetrical bundle is the universe in its original state. One of the challenges of science is to discover the symmetry hidden within the tangle of ordinary life.

The universe began in an extremely hot state of utmost simplicity and symmetry. As it expands and cools, this perfect symmetry is broken, giving rise to the world of diversity and structure we inhabit.

To us today, the fundamental forces of nature appear distinct: gravity, electromagnetism and two other forces known as the strong and weak nuclear forces. The balance between these forces determines the existence and behavior of everything in the visible universe. Originally all four forces were linked, and today scientists dream of finding a single set of equations describing all four. By colliding subatomic particles, physicists have discovered that at extremely high temperatures the differences between the forces begin to disappear.

One more act of imagination. Imagine yourself journeying back in time, closer and closer to the moment of the big bang. The further you go, the hotter and denser the universe becomes, and broken symmetries are restored. You go back millions and billions of years. Finally you reach the tiniest fraction of time a physicist can imagine:  $10^{-43}$  second after the big bang, a ten-millionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second after the beginning. Earlier than this is hard to probe, because the density of matter becomes so great that the structure, and perhaps the meaning, of space and time break down. At this point, all interactions between the fundamental forces are indistinguishable. Perfect symmetry.

How did the symmetry of the beginning become so disguised over the course of time? As the universe expands and starts to cool, its radiation and particles lose energy. The various forces become distinct.

Meanwhile, matter is also losing its oneness. By the time the universe is just one billionth of a second old, there are four forces and two dozen kinds of elementary particles. This fracturing of symmetry creates the particles of matter and energy found today around us – and within us.

Perfect symmetry sounds alluring, but it is sterile. If the primal force had not broken





*Shevirat haKeilim – Shattering of the Vessels.* Original oil painting by Victoria Franck Wetsch, SRC.

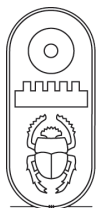
into four forces, the universe would be a very different place, if it existed at all. Tiny deviations from complete uniformity now give rise to nuclei, atoms and molecules; then galaxies, stars, planets and people. We exist today in our present condition, with all our flaws and imperfections, because of broken symmetry, just as Kabbalah teaches that our jumbled, blemished reality derives from the breaking of the vessels.

Broken symmetry and the breaking of the vessels are distinct theories, each generated by a different approach to the question of the origin of the universe: Yet, their resonance is intriguing. The human mind has devised alternative strategies – scientific and spiritual – to search for our origin. The two are distinct, but complementary. Science enables us to probe infinitesimal particles of matter and unimaginable depths of outer space, understanding each in light of the other, as we grope our way back toward the beginning. Spirituality guides us through

inner space, challenging us to retrace our path to oneness and to live in the light of what we discover.

As we have seen, the Jewish mystics picture divine sparks in every thing that exists. A scientist would say there is energy latent in subatomic particles. The spiritual task is to raise the sparks, to restore the world to God, to become aware that every single thing we do or see or touch or imagine is part of the oneness, a pattern of energy. Raising the sparks is a powerful metaphor; it transforms religion from a list of dos and don'ts or a list of dogmas into spiritual adventure.

God is not some separate being up there. She is right here, in the bark of a tree, in a friend's voice, in a stranger's eye. The world is teeming with God. Since God is *in* everything, you can serve God *through* everything. In looking for the divine spark, we discover that what is ordinary is spectacular. The holy deed is doing what needs to be done now.



The world is fractured, and God needs us to mend it. By mending the world – socially, economically, politically – we mend God, whose sparks lie scattered everywhere.

But we shouldn't fool ourselves. There will never be a complete *tikkun*, a complete mending of the world. Things will never be perfect. Society will never be completely just. How will it all end? Is there a Messiah coming to redeem us? Messiahs captivate our imagination because the world is so unfair, history is so fickle. When the Messiah comes, we are told, everything will be set right: good will finally triumph and evil will be eliminated. That would be nice, but is it the way things work?

What is the long-range future of our planet, according to science? Here's the forecast:

Our sun is about five billion years old – middle aged and reliable. But five billion years from now, the hydrogen fuel in the sun's core will run out. The core will sag while the atmosphere of the sun will mushroom, engulfing several of its closest planets, probably including Earth. Gradually, most of this atmosphere will fall away, leaving a hot, dense ball of inert matter.

Life will not necessarily come to an end. By then, human beings, or whatever type of intelligent life evolves from us, will have developed the technology to move to another, safer solar system.

Meanwhile, here we are. We still have quite a while until the year 5 billion. There will be no final perfection. No one has arranged the future ahead of time; nothing is preordained. Chance will play a leading role in the way things unfold, as it always has. We should learn to negotiate with chance. We should work on mending our own brokenness, our social fabric, our planet as best we can.

What kind of God can we believe in? The Hebrew word *emunah*, "belief," originally meant trust and faithfulness,

both human and divine. Without trusting another person, we cannot love; without trusting others, we cannot build and sustain community. But how can we trust the cosmos, or this God of oneness?

We can trust that we are part of something greater: a vast web of existence constantly expanding and evolving. When we gaze at the nighttime sky, we can ponder that we are made of elements forged within stars, out of particles born in the big bang. We can sense that we are looking back home. The further we gaze into space, the further we see back into time. If we see a galaxy ten million light years away, we are seeing that galaxy as it was ten million years ago: it has taken that long for its ancient light to arrive here. Beyond any star we will ever identify, beyond any quasar, lies the horizon of spacetime, fourteen billion light years away. But neither God nor the big bang is that far away. The big bang didn't happen somewhere out there, outside of us. Rather, we began *inside* the big bang; we now embody its primordial energy. The big bang has never stopped.

And what about God? God is not an object or a fixed destination. There is no definite way to reach God. But then again, you don't need to reach something that's everywhere. God is not somewhere else, hidden from us. God is right here, hidden from us. We are enslaved by routines. Rushing from event to event, from one chore to another, we rarely let ourselves pause and notice the splendor right in front of us. Our sense of wonder has shriveled, victimized by our pace of life.

How, then, can we find God? A clue is provided by one of the many names of *Shekhinah*, the feminine aspect of God, the divine presence. In Kabbalah She is called ocean, well, garden, apple orchard. She is also called *zot*, which means simply "this." God is right here, in this very moment, fresh and unexpected, taking you by surprise. God is *this*.

IF A PHILOSOPHER YOU WISH TO BE,  
 Where on this globe lives a man so wise,  
 Who'll ever learn what four ones do comprise,  
 And even if he'd know all this,  
 He'd still always be an apprentice.  
 Therefore, O human, with all thy might,  
 Recognise God and thyself in God's and nature's light,  
 Both these lights God pours into thee,  
 That a likeness of him thou mayest be,  
 He is one fourfold God, let thou be told,  
 As thou art a piece of clay fourfold.  
 This maketh nature to thee well known,  
 With wisdom, light and understanding to thee is it shown.  
 O DOMINE QUAM MIRABILIA SUNT OPERA TUA.

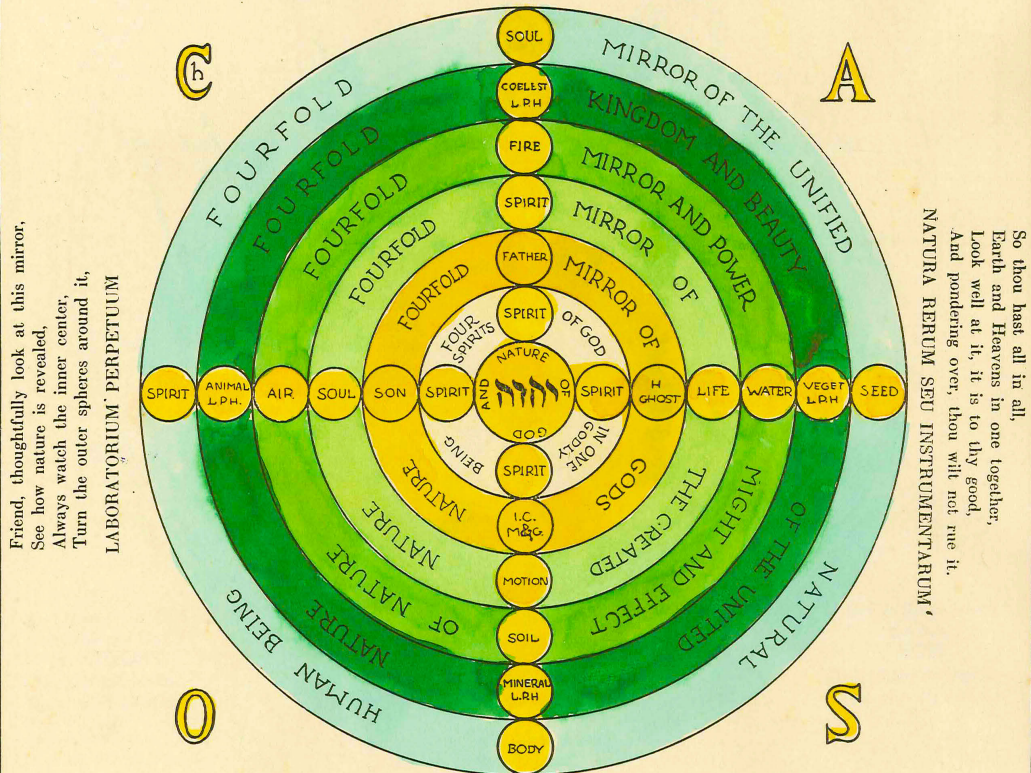
LET ONLY PATIENCE DWELL IN THEE.  
 To nothing can thine eye be blind,  
 Be it of body or of mind.  
 Therefore be thankful to thy God,  
 Who in time this before thee hast brought.  
 Be thou not jealous of the scoffer's fame,  
 Do not begrudge every mocker's great name.  
 With sophisticated vanity they strut,  
 Unbeknownst to them is what thou'st got.  
 Be happy with what God to thee gave,  
 Defy, that four in one they have.  
 Fiat and Amen, be my treasure,  
 A fourfold sphere always together.

Lord, thine eternal Spirit is in all Things.  
**Salvator ♂ Mundi**

Four fires are floating in this world,  
 Wherein God holdeth a Center,

That is locked up in four,  
 Out of which Heaven and Earth were poured.

SPECULUM DIVINUM OCCULTUM ATOUE



Friend, thoughtfully look at this mirror,  
 See how nature is revealed,  
 Always watch the inner center,  
 Turn the outer spheres around it,  
 LABORATORIUM PERPETUUM

So thou hast all in all,  
 Earth and Heavens in one together,  
 Look well at it, it is to thy good,  
 And pondering over, thou wilt not rue it.  
 NATURA RERUM SEU INSTRUMENTARIUM

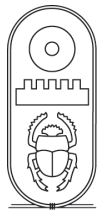
Notice Nature in its strength,  
 Look at its great life-power.  
 From God it, and all things spring,  
 And return to their centers again.

**Coel. & ♂ Terra.**

There is never a Philosopher who Nature's ultimate Principle doth not know.

Look well for the golden Magnet. If thou findest it thou wouldst get rid of thy sorrows.  
 Study well the law KNOW THYSELF, that thou may not be deceived any more.  
 Unum sunt omnia, per quod omnia.  
 Make known to thee the Terra Sancta, so that thou mayest not go astray.

Salvator Mundi. From the Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians of the 16th and 17th Centuries, hand colored by H. Spencer Lewis.





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Rosicrucian Park  
1342 Naglee Avenue • San Jose, CA 95191  
USA

